

ANDY GORDON





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Andy Gordon

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PREFACE

In this story we find Andy Gordon, the son of a poor widow, as the hero.

Being eager for an education, he is obliged to work after school hours to get it.

He is a good student and is well liked and highly respected.

Herbert Ross, one of Andy's classmates, is the son of a wealthy lawyer. He is a conceited, disagreeable boy, not well liked and not a good student. He treats Andy most shamefully, but Andy proves to be a friend in need.

The many thrilling experiences, which Andy has, bring forth his fine characteristics.

His ideas of justice are firmly fixed in his mind and he resolves to do all in his power to obtain it. However his work is not in vain and he is well rewarded.



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CHAPTER I

THE YOUNG JANITOR

The Hamilton Academy, under the charge of Rev. Dr. Euclid, stands on an eminence about ten rods back from the street in the town of the same name.

It was a quarter of nine, when a boy of sixteen, rather showily dressed, ascended the academy hill and entered the front door which was already open.

"I am early," he said to himself. "I shall have a chance to look over my Latin before Dr. Euclid comes."

It may be supposed from this speech that Herbert Ross was an earnest student, but this would be altogether a mistake.

As he entered the schoolroom, a boy of about his own age was sweeping the floor. The boy who was wielding the broom, the young janitor of the academy, was Andrew Gordon, commonly called Andy by his friends. He was a stout, well-made boy, with a face not exactly handsome, but bold, frank and good-humored.

It was said, further, that Andy received his tuition free and a dollar a week for his services in taking care of the schoolhouse. He was the son of a widow, who was in receipt of a pension of twenty dollars a month from the government, as the widow of an officer who had surrendered his life during the Civil War on the field of Gettysburg. This with what Andy could earn, was nearly all she and he had to live upon.

Herbert Ross was the only son of the village law-

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yer, a man of private fortune, who lived in a style quite beyond the average mode of living among his neighbors.

"What are you kicking up such a dust for, Andrew Gordon?" asked Herbert "I'll give you a lesson to teach you to be more careful next time."

As he spoke, he drew back his foot and kicked at the pile of dust which Andy had carefully swept to the doorway, spreading it over a considerable portion of the floor.

"What did you do that for, Herbert Ross?"

"I told you already," said Herbert. "I am a gentleman, and I don't mean to let a servant cover me with dust."

"I am the janitor of this academy," said Andy, "and if that is being a servant, then I am one. But there is one thing I tell you, Herbert. I won't allow any boy, gentleman or not, to interfere with my work."

"How can you help yourself?" asked Herbert, with a sneer.

"Take this broom and sweep up the pile of dust you have scattered," said the young janitor.

"I mean what I say. You must repair the mischief you have done."

"Must? You low-lived servant!" Herbert burst forth. "Do you know who you are talking to?"

Herbert by this time was at white heat. He seized the broom which was extended toward him, but instead of using it as he was requested, he brought it down upon Andy's shoulders.

It was not the handle, but the broom end which

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touched the young janitor, and he was not hurt; but it is needless to say that he considered himself insulted.

First he wrested the broom from Herbert; then he seized that young gentleman around the waist, and despite his struggles, deposited him forcibly on the floor, which was thick with dust.

"Two can play at your game, Herbert," he said.

"What do you mean, you low hound!" screamed Herbert, as he rose from the floor.

"I think you can tell, without any explanation," said Andy, calmly.

"Do you know that my father is one of the trustees of the academy?" he shouted, shaking his fist. "I'll get you discharged from your place."

"You can do what you like," answered Andy, "but you'd better get out of the way, for I'm going to sweep. I'll let you off from sweeping up, as you have had a lesson already."

"You'll let me off!" exclaimed Herbert, passionately. "You—a servant—give me a lesson! You don't know your place, you young beggar!"

"No more talk like that, Herbert Ross, for I won't stand it!" said Andy, firmly.

"I'll call you what I please!" retorted Herbert.

"If you call me another name, I'll lay you down in the dirt again!" said Andy.

Just then, at the open door, appeared the tall, dignified figure of Dr. Euclid, who was in time to hear the last words spoken.

"What's the matter, boys?" he asked, looking keenly from Andy to Herbert.

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"That boy has insulted me!" said Herbert. "He seized me, when I wasn't looking, and laid me down on the dirty floor!"

"What have you to say to this charge, Andrew?"

"It is true," said Andy—"all except my taking him unawares."

Andy made a correct statement of the transaction, in mild and temperate language.

"Is this correct, Herbert?" asked the doctor. "Did you interfere with Andrew in the discharge of his duties?"

"I kicked the pile of dirt," Herbert admitted.

"Why did you do that?"

"Because I wanted to teach him a lesson."

"What lesson?"

"Not to cover a gentleman with dust when he entered the room," replied Herbert, in a pompous tone.

"By the word 'gentleman' you mean to designate yourself, I presume," said Dr. Euclid.

"Those who claim to be gentlemen must behave as such. I don't approve of fighting, but I hold to the right of self-defense. I don't think this affair calls for any interference on my part," and the doctor passed on to his desk.

When recess came, Herbert stalked up to Andy, and said:

"You look out, Andy Gordon! You'll get into trouble before you know it!"

"You think you're all right because Dr. Euclid took your part this morning, but that isn't the end of the matter, by a long shot! My father is one of the trustees of this academy. He can turn the doc-

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tor out of office, and put in another teacher," continued Herbert. "I'm going to tell him tonight all that has happened, and he'll have you discharged. You can make up your mind to that."

"The janitor is not appointed by the trustees. Dr. Euclid always appoints the janitor," said Andy.

"Herbert Ross," he said, "I listened to your talk because it amused me, but I've heard enough of it."

Here Andy turned on his heel, and called out to Frank Cooper:

"Have a catch, Frank."

The two boys began to throw a ball to each other, by way of improving their practice, for both belonged to a baseball club, and Andy's special and favorite position was that of catcher.

When Herbert left school at the close of the afternoon session, he was fully resolved to make it hot for the young janitor, and for Dr. Euclid.

CHAPTER II

DR. EUCLID RECEIVES A CALL

Dr. Euclid was seated in his library, when the maidservant opened the door, and said:

"Dr. Euclid, there's a gentleman wants to see you."

"Well, show him up."

Almost immediately Brandon Ross, Esq., entered the room.

"Good-evening, Mr. Ross," said Dr. Euclid politely. "Take a seat, if you please."

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"Thank you, sir. I can't stay long. You probably expected I would call," Squire Ross began. "After that outrageous assault upon my son this morning, you could hardly suppose I, as Herbert's father, would remain calmly at home and ignore the affair?"

"I was not aware, Mr. Ross, that such an assault had been made upon your son," he replied.

"Surely you know, Dr. Euclid," said the lawyer, warmly, "that your janitor, Andrew Gordon, had assaulted Herbert?"

"I knew the boys had had a little difficulty," returned the doctor, quietly. "Your son struck Andrew with a broom. Did he tell you that?"

Mr. Ross was surprised, for Herbert had not told him that.

"It was a proper return for the violent attack which the boy made upon him. I am glad that my son showed proper resentment."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Ross, but your son's attack preceded Andrew's. It was Andrew who acted in self-defense, or, if you choose to call it so, in retaliation."

"I presume your account comes from your janitor," said the lawyer, a little disconcerted.

"On the contrary, it comes from your son. Herbert admitted to me this morning what I have just stated to you."

"Then, sir, I understand that you uphold him in his assault upon my son," said the lawyer, fiercely. "I do not propose to allow my son to be illtreated by a boy so much his inferior."

"If you mean inferior in scholarship," said the

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doctor, "you are under a misapprehension. Andrew is in your son's class in Latin and Greek, but he is quite superior to him in both of these languages."

"I won't waste my time arguing. I have come here this evening, Dr. Euclid, as one of the trustees of the Hamilton Academy, to insist upon Andrew Gordon's discharge from the position of janitor."

"I must decline to comply with your request, Mr. Ross."

"Dr. Euclid, you don't seem to remember that I am a trustee of the academy!" said the lawyer, pompously.

"Oh, yes, I do! But the trustees have nothing to do with the appointment of a janitor."

"You will admit, sir, that they have something to do with the appointment of a principal," said Brandon Ross, significantly.

"I presume I understand you, Mr. Ross," said Dr. Euclid in a dignified tone, "and I have to reply that you are only one out of six trustees."

"Very well, sir! very well, sir!" exclaimed the lawyer. "I shall be under the necessity of withdrawing my son from the academy."

"As to withdrawing him from school, you must do as you please. Such a step will injure him much more than anyone else."

"Good-evening, sir!" said the lawyer.

"Good-evening!"

When Lawyer Ross returned to his showy dwelling, he found Herbert eagerly waiting to hear an account of his mission.

"Well father, did Dr. Euclid agree to discharge Andy Gordon?"

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"No, he didn't."

"I should think," Herbert ventured to say, "that Dr. Euclid wouldn't dare to disobey you, as you are a trustee."

"All I can say is that Dr. Euclid will sooner or later be sorry for upholding Andrew Gordon in his lawless acts. He also says Andrew is a better scholar than you!"

"Then I don't want to go to his confounded school any more. May I leave the academy?" asked Herbert, eagerly.

"Yes. After the course which Dr. Euclid has seen fit to adopt, I shall not force a son of mine to remain under his instruction. I told him so this evening."

Herbert left the room, well pleased on the whole with the upshot of the affair.

Half an hour later an old man, Joshua Starr by name, was ushered into the lawyer's presence. He was a man bordering upon seventy, with pinched and wizened features, which bore the stamp of meanness upon them. By one method and another he had managed to scrape together a considerable property, not wholly in a creditable manner.

"Good-evening, Squire Ross!" he said. "I've come to you on a little matter of business."

"Well, Mr. Starr, state your case."

"You see, I've got a note agin' Widder Gordon's husband for a hundred dollars, with interest."

"But her husband is dead."

"Jes' so, jes' so! But he borrowed the money when he was alive, in the year 1862."

"Why didn't you present it for payment?"

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"I did," said Starr. "But it w'n't convenient for him to pay it."

"Have you presented it for payment to the widow?" asked Ross.

"Yes; and what do you think? She says her husband paid it. It's ridikilus!"

"In that case you would have surrendered the note or given a receipt."

"She says I had mislaid the note, and her husband agreed to take a receipt instead."

"But she don't show the receipt."

"No; that's where I've got her," chuckled the old man. "Can you collect it for me?"

"I can try; but I don't suppose she has any property."

"There's her furniture," suggested the old man.

"Well, you may leave the note, and I will see what I can do. Good-night."

"Good-night, squire!"

"Now, Master Andrew Gordon," the lawyer said to himself, "I think I can make you rue the day when you assaulted my son."

CHAPTER III

A LAWYER'S VISIT

The next day Mrs. Gordon was sitting at her sewing machine when a knock was heard at her humble door.

"Mr. Ross!" she said in surprise, as she recognized in her caller the wealthy village lawyer.

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"Yes, Mrs. Gordon, I call upon a little matter of business."

"Come in?" said the widow. "Take the rocking-chair, Mr. Ross."

"Mrs. Gordon, I fear the business may prove unpleasant for you, but you will remember that I am only an agent in the matter. Mr. Joshua Starr has placed in my hands, for collection, a note for one hundred dollars, executed by your late husband. With arrears of interest, it will amount to one hundred and thirty dollars, or thereabouts. I suppose you know something about it."

"Yes, Mr. Ross, I do know something about it. The note was paid by my husband during his life—in fact, just before he set out for the war—and Mr. Starr knows it perfectly well. I regard Mr. Starr as a swindler."

"I have in my hands the note signed by your husband. If he paid it, why was it not given up?"

"I will tell you sir. When the note came due, he paid it; but Mr. Starr pretended that he had mislaid the note and couldn't lay hands on it. He told my husband he would give him a receipt for the money, and that would be all the same. He was laying a trap for him all the time."

"But," said the lawyer, "I suppose you have the receipt."

"I am sorry to say that I have not been able to find it anywhere. I have hunted high and low, and I am afraid my poor husband must have carried it away in his wallet when he went South with his regiment."

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"That would certainly be unfortunate," said Lawyer Ross, veiling the satisfaction he felt, "for you will, in that case, have to pay the money over again."

"But I have no money. I cannot pay!"

"You have your pension," said the lawyer.

"I need all I have for the support of Andy and myself."

"Then I am afraid my client will levy upon your furniture."

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed the poor woman, in agitation. "Can such things be allowed in a civilized country?"

"It's a common thing, and quite regular, I can assure you. I will venture to give you a week to find the receipt, though not authorized by my client to do so. Good-afternoon!"

As he was going out he met Andy.

The boy just caught a glimpse of his mother in tears, through the open door of the sitting room, and said to Mr. Ross, whom he judged to be responsible for his mother's grief:

"What have you been saying to my mother, to make her cry?"

"Stand aside, boy! It's none of your business," said the lawyer.

"My mother's business is mine," said Andy, firmly.

"I came on business of my client, Mr. Starr. I shall take a future opportunity to settle with you," said Mr. Ross.

He walked away, and Andy entered the cottage to learn from his mother what had passed between her and the lawyer.

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"Did he say anything about a quarrel between his son Herbert and myself?" he inquired.

"Not a word. I didn't know there had been one."

Thereupon Andy told the story with which we are already familiar.

"I thought he had come about that," he said.

"I wish he had. It wouldn't give us as much trouble as this note. He says we will have to pay it if we can't find the receipt. I have hunted everywhere that I could think of, and I am afraid it must be as I have long ago thought, that your poor father carried it away with him when he left for the army."

"Mother," said Andy, "there's only one thing left to do. To-morrow is Saturday, and I shan't need to go to school. I'll call on Mr. Starr, and see if I can't shame him into giving up his claim on us."

"There's no hope of that," said Mrs. Gordon. "You don't know the man."

"Yes, I do! I know he is a mean skinflint, but I can't do any worse than fail. I will try it."

The farmhouse of Mr. Joshua Starr was situated about a mile from the village. It was a dilapidated old building, standing very much in need of paint and repairs, but the owner felt too poor to provide either.

Andy went up to the front door, and used the old brass knocker vigorously, but there was no response.

"I suppose Mr. Starr is somewhere about the place," he said to himself, and bent his steps toward the barn.

The old man espied Andy just before he got within hearing distance, and guessed his errand.

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"Howdy do, Andy Gordon?" he said, in a quavering voice. "Have you come to pay that note I hold agin' your mother?"

"You know very well, Mr. Starr, that my father paid that money long ago."

"That ain't a very likely story, Andy. Still, ef you've got the receipt to show it, it may make a difference."

"We haven't been able to find the receipt," said Andy.

"Of course you ain't, and a good reason why. There never was any receipt. You don't expect I'd give a receipt when the note wasn't paid."

"No, I don't; but we both know the note was paid. What do you mean to do?" asked Andy.

"Waal, I want to collect my money. A hundred dollars is a good deal of money. I can't afford to lose it."

"We can't pay it. We have no money."

"Then I'll have to take your furniture," said Mr. Starr.

Finally, discouraged by his poor success Andy went home.

On the way he met Louis Schick, a schoolfellow, who hailed him.

"You'd better go to the post office, Andy. There's a big parcel there for your mother."

Wondering what it could be, Andy went to the post office.

The village post office was located in a drug store, and the druggist had plenty of time to attend to the

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duties of the office, as well as the calls of his regular customers.

"I suppose you want some pills, Andy?" said the druggist, as our hero entered the office.

"No, sir," answered Andy. "Louis Schick told me there was something in the office for mother."

"Here it is, Andy, I hope it's something valuable."

Andy put the parcel in his inside coat pocket and took the nearest way home.

As he entered the house he did not immediately speak of the parcel, his thoughts being diverted by his mother's question:

"Well, Andy, did you see Mr. Starr?"

"Yes, mother, I saw him," answered Andy, soberly.

"Well what does he say?" Mrs. Gordon inquired.

"Nothing that's encouraging. Mother, I believe he is one of the meanest men I ever knew."

"Oh mother," he said, quickly. "I got a letter, or package, from the post office just now, for you. Perhaps there is something in it that may help us."

He drew from his pocket the package and handed it to his mother.

Mrs. Gordon cut the string which helped confine the parcel, and then cut open the envelope.

"It's your father's wallet, Andy," she said, in a voice of strong emotion, removing the contents.

"Here is a note. Perhaps that will tell," said his mother, drawing from the envelope a folded sheet of note paper. "I will read it."

"DEAR MADAM: I have to apologize to you for retaining so long in my possession an article which

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properly belongs to you. Let me tell you how this wallet came into my possession.

"Like your lamented husband, I was a soldier in the late war. Toward the close of a great battle I found him lying upon the ground bleeding freely from a terrible wound in the breast. Though nearly gone, he recognized me, and he said, as his face brightened:

"Ramsay, I believe I am dying. Will you do me a favor?"

"You have only to ask," I said.

"You'll find a wallet in my pocket. Its contents are important to my family. Will you take it and send it to my wife?"

"Of course, I agreed to do it, and your husband, I have reason to know, died with a burden lifted from his mind in that conviction. But before the action was over I, too, was stricken by one of the enemy's bullets. My wound was not a dangerous one, but it rendered me incapable of thought or action. I was sent to the hospital, and my personal effects were forwarded to my family.

"Well, in course of time I recovered, and, remembering your husband's commission, I searched for the wallet—but searched in vain. The war closed and I returned home. I ought to have written to you about the matter, but I feared to excite vain regrets.

"Yesterday, however, in examining an old trunk, I, to my great joy, discovered the long-missing wallet. My duty, however, is plain—to forward you the article at once. I do so, therefore, and beg you to

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relieve my anxiety by apprising me as soon as you receive it.

"Once more let me express my regret that there has been so great a delay, and permit me to subscribe myself your husband's friend,

"BENJAMIN RAMSAY."

The first, and most prominent in the list of contents, was a roll of greenbacks. The bills were of various denominations, and they aggregated the sum of forty-five dollars.

"Here are some papers, too, mother," said Andy. "They seem to be receipted bills."

"I wish," sighed the widow, "that the receipt from Mr. Starr might be found among them."

One by one Andy opened the papers, hoping, but not much expecting, that the missing receipt might be found.

"Here it is, mother!" he exclaimed at last, triumphantly flourishing a slip of paper.

"Let me see it, Andy," said his mother, hurriedly.

"Don't you see, mother? Here is his signature—Joshua Starr. I wonder what the old rascal will say to that? Don't say anything about it, mother," said Andy. "I want to see how far the old swindler will go. I wonder what he will say when we show him the receipt?"

CHAPTER IV

ANDY IS ENGAGED FOR POLICE DUTY

When Andy came home from school the next afternoon, he found that his mother had callers.

In a lonely situation about a quarter of a mile beyond the farmhouse of Mr. Joshua Starr, lived two maiden ladies—Susan and Sally Peabody.

Their father had died thirty years before, leaving them a cottage, with an acre of land, and some twelve thousand dollars in stocks and bonds.

Living economically, this sum had materially increased, and they were considered in the village rich ladies.

The elder of these ladies, Miss Sally Peabody, Andy found in his mother's sitting room.

As he entered, he heard Miss Peabody say:

"I should like to borrow your Andy to-night, Mrs. Gordon, if you have no objection. I want him to sleep at our house tonight."

"You see, Mrs. Gordon, we had a sum of five hundred dollars paid in unexpectedly this morning, and we can't get it to the bank till Monday. Now, it makes my sister nervous to think of having such a sum of money in the house. I was reading in the papers of a burglar entering a house at night in Thebes—the next village—and it might happen to us. I don't know what we should do, as we have no man in the house."

"Andy isn't a man," said Mrs. Gordon, smiling.

"No, he isn't a man, but he is a good stout boy,

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and we should feel safer if he were in the house."

"I'll go, Miss Peabody," he said, promptly.

"I don't suppose really, that there is any danger of the house being entered," said Miss Peabody; "but still we shall feel safer with Andy in the house."

"Why don't you engage a man, Miss Sally?" asked the widow.

"Five hundred dollars would be a great temptation to one who was generally honest. No, Mrs. Gordon, I would much rather have Andy. If you will let him stay at our house to-night and to-morrow night, I will pay him for his trouble."

"Oh, I wouldn't ask anything for it, Miss Peabody!" said Andy.

"But I should insist on paying you all the same, Andy. My sister and I make it a rule never to ask a service of anyone without paying for it."

"When do you want Andy to come over?" asked Mrs. Gordon.

"We should be glad to have him come to supper. It will seem pleasant to us to have company. Susan and I get tired sometimes of only seeing one another's faces."

"Very well, Miss Peabody, I will be on hand."

"I suppose there is no fear of your having to fight burglars," said Mrs. Gordon. "No burglary has been known here for years."

"No, I suppose not," answered Andy. "I shan't have any chance to show off my bravery."

He might have come to a different opinion if he had seen the villainous-looking tramp, Mike Hogan, who, skulking near the house, had heard, through

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the open window, the first and most important part of the conversation.

Mike Hogan was a low-browed ruffian, with unkempt hair and a beard of a week's growth.

Mike had served a term in Sing Sing, but punishment in no way altered his way of life.

He had already made two calls in the village. The first was to the house of Mr. Ross, the lawyer.

The master of the house was not at home, but Herbert was in the front yard.

"Young gentleman," said Mike, "I am a poor man. Once I was prosperous, but ill health and misfortune came, and swept away all my money; and now I have to travel around and ask a few pennies of kind strangers."

"Why don't you go to work? You look strong enough," said Herbert.

"Why don't I work? I ain't able," answered the tramp. "You look rich and prosperous. Can't you spare a few pennies for a poor man?"

"My father's rich, but he don't give anything to tramps."

"You'd better keep your tongue between your teeth, young whippersnapper! You can't insult me because I am a poor man. Come out here and I'll wring your neck, you young villain!" said Mike Hogan, whose evil temper was now fully aroused.

"Go away from here! You have no business to lean on our gate!"

"I shall lean on it as long as I please!" said the tramp, defiantly. "Are you coming out here?"

At this moment, however, Herbert was re-enforced

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by his dog, Prince, who came round from behind the house.

"Bite him, Prince!" exclaimed Herbert, triumphantly.

Prince needed no second invitation. He sprang over the fence and made for the tramp, intending to fasten his teeth in the leg of the latter.

But Mike Hogan was on the alert. He bent over, and, as the dog approached, dexterously seized him, threw him over on his back, and then commenced powerfully compressing his throat and choking him.

"Let him go, and he shan't bite you!" said Herbert.

"I will take care of that myself," said Hogan. "When I get through with him, you will have to bury him."

"Let him go, and I'll give you a quarter."

"That sounds better," said Mike Hogan, moderating his grip. "Where's the quarter?"

Herbert hurried to the fence and handed over the coin.

Mike took it, and, with a laugh, tossed the almost senseless dog into the yard, where he lay gasping for breath.

Continuing on his way he stopped at a house where he was offered some cold meat, but no money.

In passing Mrs. Gordon's house his attention was attracted by the sound of voices. Thinking it possible that he might hear something which he could turn to advantage he placed himself in a position where he could overhear what was said.

His eyes sparkled when he heard Miss Sally speak

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of the large sum of money she had in the house.

"Ho, ho!" said he, to himself, "I'm in luck. You won't need to carry that money to the bank, my lady. I'll take care of it for you. As for this boy who is to guard it, I'll scare him out of his wits!"

When Sally Peabody left the cottage of Mrs. Gordon she was not aware that her steps were tracked by one of the most desperate criminals in the State.

He followed her far enough to learn where she lived, and then concealed himself in the woods until the time should come for active operations.

CHAPTER V

ANDY ON GUARD

The Peabody girls, as people in Hamilton were accustomed to call them, though they were over fifty years of age, lived in an old-fashioned house, consisting of a main part and an L. This L part consisted of a single story, surmounted by a gently sloping roof. From the chamber over the sitting room one could look out upon the roof of the L part.

This the reader will please to remember.

When Andy knocked at the door at five o'clock, it was opened by Miss Sally Peabody in person.

"I am glad you have come, Andy," she said.

"I don't know whether I can do any good, Miss Sally," he said, "but I am very glad to come."

She preceded our hero into the sitting room, where her sister Susan had set the table for tea.

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"Here he is, Susan—here is Andy," said Sally.

Andy received a cordial welcome from the elder of the two sisters.

"Supper is ready. I hope you have an appetite, Andy," said Susan.

"I generally have," answered Andy, as he seated himself at the neat supper table.

Our hero, whether he was in danger from burglars or not, was in danger of being made sick by the overflowing hospitality of the sisters. They so plied him with hot biscuits, cake, preserves and pie that our hero felt uncomfortable when he rose from the table. Even then his hospitable entertainers did not seem to think he had eaten enough.

"Why, you haven't made a supper, Andy," said Miss Sally.

"I don't think I ever ate so much in my life before at a single meal," answered Andy. "If you don't mind, I'll go out and walk a little."

"Certainly, Andy, if you wish."

Andy went out and walked about the place.

In the corner of a small stable, Andy found a musket.

He raised it to his shoulder and pulled the trigger.

Instantly there was a deafening report, and the two old maids ran to the door in dire dismay.

"What's the matter?" they cried.

"I was trying this gun," said Andy, a little ashamed.

"A gun! Where did it come from?"

Andy told them where he had found it and they concluded it had been left by a neighbor, who had

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recently done a little repair work around the place.

"May I take it into the house," he asked, "and keep it in the chamber where I am to sleep?"

"I think there is no objection," said Sally. "We are going to put you into the chamber over the sitting room," she added. "The money is in a little trunk under your bed. You won't be afraid to have it there, will you?"

"I am never afraid of money," said Andy, smiling.

Andy went to bed at an early hour—at about a quarter after nine.

The gun he placed in the corner of the room, close to his bed.

He did not know how long he had been asleep, when, all at once, he awoke suddenly. The moonlight was streaming into the room, and by the help of it he saw a villainous-looking face jammed against the pane of the window overlooking the shed.

"A burglar!" thought he, and sprang from the bed.

As Andy rose, he grasped the old musket, and not, without a thrill of excitement faced the scoundrel.

If the gun had been loaded, he would have felt safe, but he knew very well that he could do no harm with it.

Mike Hogan saw the gun, but he was not a coward, and he felt convinced that Andy would not dare to use it, although he supposed it to be loaded.

"Open this window!" cried Hogan.

As he spoke, he smashed a pane with his fist, but not without cutting his hand and drawing blood.

"What do you want?" repeated Andy.

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"I want that five hundred dollars you are guarding, and I mean to have it!" returned Hogan.

"Open this window, I tell you once more."

"I won't!" said Andy, shortly.

"Put down your gun," he said in a milder tone. "I have something to propose to you. There are five hundred dollars in this house. Open the window and let me in and I'll share the money with you."

"Then you think I am a thief like yourself?" exclaimed Andy, indignantly. "You are very much mistaken. Even if this money were in the house I wouldn't take a cent of it."

"Oh, you're mighty honest! And I'm a thief, am I?" sneered Hogan, surveying our hero with an ugly look.

As he spoke, he enlarged the hole in the pane, and, putting in his hand, attempted, by thrusting it upward, to unlock the fastening.

Andy brought down the butt end of the musket on the intruding hand with all his strength, the result being a howl of pain from the burglar.

"Once more, will you open the window?" demanded Hogan, who would not have parleyed so long if he had known any way to get in without Andy's help.

"No, I won't!" answered Andy with resolution.

A thought came to Mike, and he began to descend the sloping roof.

"What is he going to do now?" thought Andy. "Has he given it up as a bad job?"

He had to descend cautiously, for the shingles

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were slippery, but he finally reached the lowest point and jumped down.

"If I could only find an axe or a hatchet," he said to himself. "I would make short work of the window. I don't believe the boy will dare to shoot."

He searched for the articles he had named, but in vain.

"What can I take?" he thought, perplexed.

His eyes fell upon a thick club, not unlike a baseball bat, and this seemed to him suitable for his purpose. He took it and commenced reascending to the roof again. There was a fence, which helped him as a stepping-stone. Meanwhile Andy had not been idle.

First of all, he saw that it was unsafe to have the money any longer in his custody. He went to the door of the parlor chamber, which the two sisters occupied, and rapped loudly on the door.

"Who's there?" asked Susan, in trembling accents, through the keyhole.

"It's me—Andy. Please open the door—quick. I want to hand you the trunk," answered Andy.

"What for? Is there a burglar in the house?"

"No; but there's one trying to get into my room."

"Oh, heavens! What shall we do?"

"Take the tin trunk, and I'll manage him," said Andy.

"He mustn't hurt you. I'd rather he had the money. Take it and give it to him and ask him to go," said Susan.

"Not much!" answered Andy. "Is there any hot water in the house?"

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"Yes; we keep a fire all night in the kitchen, and the teakettle is full."

He ran downstairs, seized the teakettle from the stove, grabbed a tin dipper, and then ran up to his chamber again.

"There, before the window, stood Mike Hogan, with the club in his hand and a look of triumph on his face. In the dim light, he did not see the teakettle.

"Once more, and for the last time, I ask you to open that window."

"I would rather not."

"You will, if you know what is best for yourself. Do you see this club?"

He swung back the club and brought it down with full force upon the window frame. Of course, the panes were shattered and the frail wooden sticks which constituted the frame were demolished. Another blow and the window lay in ruins on the carpet of Andy's chamber.

"The crisis has come," thought Andy, his nerves quivering with excitement.

And, unobserved by the triumphant burglar, he poured out the scalding hot water from the teakettle into the tin dipper.

Mike Hogan was in the act of scaling the window sill, over the debris of the broken glass and wood, when Andy dashed the contents of the tin dipper into his face.

There was a fearful yell as the hot water deluged his face and neck, and the scalded burglar, losing his hold on the sill, blinded and maddened by pain,

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lost his footing and slipped down the sloping roof with ever-increasing rapidity. He rolled over at the eaves, and fell upon his back with a violence which lamed, though it did not disable him—a thoroughly demoralized burglar.

There was a pump and a trough in the yard. Hogan jumped up and ran hastily to it. He dipped his scalded face in the stream of water, and gained temporary relief. Again and again he dipped his face in the cool water, and his pain was somewhat abated.

“Oh, the young villain!” he groaned. “I wish I had him here. I’d tear him limb from limb.”

“Poor fellow!” thought Andy, pitying the poor wretch. “I am sorry for his pain, but I couldn’t defend myself in any other way. He won’t try to get in again, I’m thinking.”

He locked the door of the room from the outside, and decided to spend the rest of the night upon the sofa in the sitting room. First, however, he went to the room of the old ladies, to tell them that the danger was past.

CHAPTER VI

EXCITEMENT IN THE VILLAGE

For the remainder of the night Andy, as the saying is, slept with one eye open. The burglar had enough to think of, and it seemed very unlikely that he would make another attempt to enter the house. Still, Andy thought it best to watch him.

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Through the window he could see Hogan dipping his face again and again in the trough. This continued for perhaps an hour. Then he slowly left the yard. For the remainder of the night the house had rest.

Early in the morning the two sisters came downstairs. Andy, who had dressed himself, to be prepared for an emergency, was lying on the sofa, sleeping peacefully.

"Poor boy!" murmured Susan. "What a terrible night he must have passed!"

"And all in our defense, too. I never dreamed that he was so brave."

"It seems to me, sister, we ought to pay him handsomely for what he has done."

"I am quite of your opinion, Sister Sally. How much do you think we ought to give him?"

"I wouldn't do what he did for fifty dollars."

"Shall it be fifty dollars, then?"

"If you are willing."

"I am quite willing. Do you dare to go up with me into the chamber overhead?"

Finally the two sisters mustered the necessary courage and cautiously crept upstairs, and paused before the door, which was locked upon the outside.

With some apprehension they opened the door. When they saw the wreck of glass and wood upon the carpet, they raised their hands in dismay.

"What a terrible fight poor Andy must have had!" said Susan.

"He will tell us about it when he wakes up. We

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must give him a good breakfast. He deserves it, after all he has done."

At eight o'clock, Andy sat down to a nice breakfast. It seemed that neither of the two ladies could express sufficient gratitude, or induce him to eat enough.

"But for you, Andy, we might have been murdered in our beds."

"I don't think so," answered Andy, modestly; "but I think you would have lost your money."

"That we should! Now tell us all about it."

So Andy told the story, amid exclamations of wonder and admiration from the two sisters.

It is needless to say that the news of the midnight attack upon the house of the Peabody sisters spread like wildfire through the village.

Probably not less than a hundred persons called to see the demolished window, and Andy had to tell the story over and over till he was weary of it.

Among those who were interested was Herbert Ross. He suspected, and rightly, that it was the same man who had stopped at his father's gate, and nearly strangled his dog Prince.

He cross-questioned our hero as to the appearance of the burglar.

"It's the very man that called at our house!" exclaimed Herbert, in excitement.

Of course, he was questioned, and gave an account of the call of Hogan, in which he appeared to considerably greater advantage than he had actually done.

Herbert succeeded in his wish to draw attention

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to himself, and told the story of his encounter with the tramp and burglar many times—adding a little every time—till, by dint of repetitions, he persuaded himself that he had acted a very heroic part, and was entitled to share the honors of the day with Andy.

On Monday morning, Andy's guard was over; but there was still a service which the old ladies desired of him.

The money was to be deposited in the Cranston Bank, located six miles away. There was no railroad connecting the two places, and the road was a lonely one, extending part of the way through the woods.

On previous occasions, the ladies had themselves gone to the bank, when they had occasion to deposit money, but the recent attempt at burglary had so terrified them that they felt afraid to venture.

In their emergency, they thought of Andy, and asked him if he would be willing to drive over and carry the money with him.

"Oh, yes!" answered Andy, who was fond of driving. "I couldn't go till I had attended to my duties at the academy, but I should be through by nine o'clock."

"That would be early enough. But you would lose school."

"Only for half a day, and Dr. Euclid would excuse me."

So it was arranged that Andy was to carry the five hundred dollars to the Cranston Bank.

"You are not afraid to drive to Cranston, Andy?" said Miss Sally.

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"No; what should I be afraid of?" asked our hero.

"You are not timid about horses, then?"

"No, I'm not afraid. I only wish I were in Add Bean's place. He is driving around every day with his father's horse."

The boy referred to—Addison Bean, called Add, for short—was one of Andy's schoolmates at the academy, and was quite as fond of driving as Andy himself.

"I wonder if we couldn't engage Mr. Bean's horse and carriage? Will you see?"

"Yes; it is a good one, and I would like to drive it."

Andy called at Mr. Bean's and succeeded in his errand. The horse was to be ready for him at nine o'clock.

"What are you going to Cranston for, Andy?" asked Mr. Bean.

"To the bank, for the Peabody girls."

"Don't let anybody know your errand."

"Do you think there is any danger?"

"There is always danger when a man is supposed to be carrying money. A boy is still more in danger."

"I won't tell anybody my errand."

Mr. Bean gave Andy another suggestion, which proved of value to him. What it was, the reader will ascertain in due time.

Andy got into the carriage—a buggy—and drove round to the house of the maiden ladies. He fastened the horse at the fence, and opening the gate, went in.

"Have you got the money ready, Miss Peabody?" he asked, addressing Miss Susan.

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"Here it is, Andy—four hundred and fifty dollars."

"But I thought," said Andy, in surprise, "that there were five hundred dollars?"

"We have another use for fifty dollars," said Sally. "We are going to give it to you."

"We feel that it is due to you on account of the bravery you showed the other night," said Miss Susan.

"I thank you very much!" said Andy, quite overwhelmed, "but it is altogether too much for me to receive."

"We are judges of that. You can make good use of the money, or your mother can, and we shan't miss it."

Andy set out on his trip in high spirits. It was a fine morning. The air was pleasant and bracing, and the sun shed a flood of glory over the landscape.

"I wonder what has become of the burglar?" thought Andy, as he rode smoothly along the road.

Scarcely had this thought passed through his mind when he was hailed by a stranger whom he had just passed on the road.

It was a young man, slender and well dressed, with a ready smile and a set of dazzling white teeth.

"My young friend, are you going to Cranston?"

"Yes," answered Andy.

"So am I. Is it far?"

"About five miles from here."

Andy had already gone a mile on his way.

"Five miles! Whew! that is a distance. I say, haven't you got room for one more?"

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Ordinarily Andy would have been entirely willing to take in a passenger, being naturally sociable and obliging, but now he was made cautious by the nature of his errand and the knowledge of the large sum of money which he was carrying. He halted his horse and looked perplexed.

"Come, be obliging," said the stranger.

"You are a stranger," said Andy, hesitatingly.

"Well, suppose I am. I haven't got the smallpox or any other contagious disorder," laughed the young man. "Come on, you don't mind making a little money. I'll give you a dollar if you'll give me a ride."

"It isn't worth a dollar," said Andy, honestly.

"If you'll take me for fifty cents, all the better."

"I might as well," thought Andy. "Of course, he can know nothing of my errand, and it's an easy way to earn fifty cents. I don't want to be too cowardly. "Well," he said, after a pause, "I'll take you. Jump in!"

"Enough said," returned the other.

And he lost no time in availing himself of the invitation.

They talked together on different topics till Andy reached the lonely part of the road, when a sudden change came over his companion.

"Now to business!" he said, in a quick stern voice. "Give me that money you have in your pocket, and be quick about it!"

Turning hastily, Andy confronted a pistol in the hand of his companion. It was held within six inches of his head, and might well have startled an older person than Andy.

CHAPTER VII

FOILING A HIGHWAYMAN

Of course Andy was startled when he saw the pistol in close proximity to his head.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I have no time for fooling!" said the young man, sharply. "Give me that money you have in your possession, or it will be the worse for you."

"What money?" asked Andy.

"The money you are carrying to Cranston to deposit in the bank for the old women in Hamilton."

"Where could he have found out about it?" thought Andy. "I wish somebody would come along."

"Pray don't take it from me, Mr. Robber!" said Andy, pretending to be overcome with terror. "They will think I took it."

"I'll attend to that," he said, "I'll write them an anonymous letter, saying that I took it from you."

"I won't exactly give it to you," said Andy; "but you can take it."

So saying, he drew a large wallet from his inside pocket, and, before his companion could grasp it, threw it some rods away by the roadside.

"There," he said; "you see I didn't give it to you, though I can't help your taking it."

"Stop the horse!" his companion exclaimed. "I'll get out here."

"All right!" said Andy. "You'll be sure to write

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to Miss Peabody that I couldn't help giving you the money?"

"Oh, yes! What a simpleton he is!" thought the highwayman, as he sprang from the buggy, and hurried in the direction of the wallet, now some little distance back.

As soon as he had gotten rid of his companion, Andy brought down his whip with emphasis on the back of his spirited horse, and dashed over the road at great speed.

The young man smiled as he heard the flying wheels.

He stooped and picked up the wallet, and opened it to feast his eyes on the thick roll of bank bills, but was overcome with rage, fury and disappointment when he found that the supposed treasure consisted only of rolls of brown paper, so folded as to swell out the wallet and give the impression of value.

"The artful young scoundrel!" he exclaimed, between his closed teeth. "He has made a fool of me, and I all the time looked upon him as a simpleton. What shall I say to Hogan, who put me up to this job?"

He had a momentary idea of pursuing Andy, but by this time the buggy was a long distance ahead, and every minute was increasing the distance.

The young man hesitated a moment, and then plunged into the woods that skirted the road.

Continuing his walk for five minutes, he came to a secluded spot, where, under a tree, reclined an old acquaintance of ours—in brief, Mr. Michael Hogan.

Hogan's face was red and inflamed, and his eyes

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were sore. He was suffering from the severe scalding which had rewarded his attempt to enter the house of the Misses Peabody.

He looked up quickly as he heard the approach of his confederate, and demanded, eagerly:

"Well, Bill, did you see the boy?"

"Yes, I saw him."

"And you have got the money?" asked Hogan with like eagerness.

"I have got that," answered the younger man, as he displayed the deceptive wallet.

Hogan opened the wallet quickly. When he saw the contents, he turned upon his confederate with lowering brow.

"What does this mean?" he demanded, in a harsh voice.

"It means that I have been fooled," said Bill, bitterly.

"Then will you explain this foolery?" said Hogan, sharply. "Why did you let the boy palm off this worthless paper on you?"

"I'll tell you all about it," said Bill.

Thereupon he told the story, which is already familiar to the reader.

"We ought to be revenged upon him," declared Bill, hurriedly, anxious to divert the wrath of the elder man into a channel less menacing to himself. "I have a plan—"

"The boy will have to come back along the same road. Let's lie in wait for him."

"But he will have deposited the money in the bank. It will do no good——"

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"Not in the way of money, but you can be revenged upon him for the way he treated you the other night."

"There's something in that," he said. "If I get hold of him, I will give him something to remember me by!"

The lawless pair posted themselves near the road, yet in concealment, and awaited impatiently for the return of Andy from the Cranston Bank.

After parting with his troublesome traveling companion, Andy lost no time in continuing on his way to the Cranston Bank, where he had the satisfaction of depositing the four hundred and fifty dollars which had been intrusted to him.

"I'm glad to get rid of the money," said Andy, breathing a deep sigh of relief as he received back the bank book. "Twice I have had a narrow escape from robbery."

"Were you the boy that proved more than a match for a burglar, Saturday night?" asked the teller.

"Have you heard of it, then?" asked Andy.

"Oh, yes! Such news travels fast. You are a plucky boy."

"I was in more danger this morning," said Andy.

"How?" asked the teller and the other employes of the bank.

Andy told his story, and the narration increased the high opinion which the bank officials already had begun to entertain of his courage and shrewdness.

"Are you not afraid the man may lie in wait for you on your way home?"

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"There is no other road to take, and I must chance it."

"You ought not to go back alone," said the paying teller.

"Where shall I find company?"

Just then a man entered the bank and presented a check.

"The very man!" said the receiving teller. "He will go with you."

Andy looked at the newcomer, and was led to doubt whether such a man would be of much service to him. He was a short, slender man, of thirty-five, very quiet in his manner with hair inclined to be red.

"Mr. Perkins," said the paying teller, "you heard of the attempted burglary at Hamilton on Saturday night?"

"Yes; that is partly what I came to this neighborhood about," answered Mr. Perkins, quietly.

"That is the boy who defended the house and foiled the burglar."

"My young friend," Mr. Perkins said, "you are the very person I most wished to see. Will you answer me a few questions?"

"Yes, sir, with pleasure."

"What was the appearance of the man who attempted to enter the house where the money was kept?"

Andy gave, as nearly as he could, a description of Hogan and his peculiarities.

"I know the man," he said. "I didn't think he was in this part of the country, but I am glad to hear that

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he is so near. I think I can put a spoke in his wheel."

"Who is it?" asked the paying teller.

"A man with more than one name. He is best known as Mike Hogan, though I am not sure whether this is his real name or not."

"I wonder if the other man is one of his friends?" said Andy, musingly.

"The other man?" repeated Mr. Perkins, inquiringly.

"Yes, the man that tried to rob me this morning."

"This is something new to me," returned the detective. "Was an attempt made upon you this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me about it."

Of course, Andy gave for the second time an account of his morning's adventure.

"Unquestionably the two men are in league together," he said.

"Have you any idea who the younger man is?" asked the teller.

"No; it may be one of half a dozen. The description will fit quite a number of my acquaintances. My theory is that Hogan was near at hand when the attack was made, and that he instigated it. I presume that it was from him that the younger man learned that you were likely to come this way with the money in your possession. When are you going back?"

"I am ready now."

"We thought the boy might be stopped again," said

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Mr. Smith, "and we recommend him not to go alone."

"He won't be obliged to go back alone, as I will ask a seat in his carriage," said Mr. Perkins. "Stay here, and I will join you very shortly."

A lady, neatly attired in an alpaca dress, entered from the street, and coming up to our hero, said:

"Are you ready?"

Andy stared at her in surprise.

She raised a green veil, and with some difficulty he recognized the features of Perkins, the detective.

"They won't be afraid of a woman," said Perkins, with a meaning smile. "Come along."

The sudden transformation of Perkins into a woman struck Andy with amazement.

"I see you are surprised at my appearance," Mr. Perkins remarked, with a smile.

"Do you often dress up as a woman?"

"Not often; but sometimes, as in the present instance, it seems desirable. You see, our friends of the highway wouldn't be very apt to show themselves, if they should see a man with you."

"I don't know," said Andy, doubtfully. "Both of them together would be more than a match for us."

"You think so?" returned the detective. "I see you haven't a very high opinion of my abilities or physical strength."

"Hogan, as you call him, looks like a very strong man," said Andy. "He is a good deal larger than you."

"That is true. But a man's strength isn't always in proportion to his size. Give me your hand, please."

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Perkins' hands were incased in tight-fitting kid gloves, and were small for a man. What was Andy's surprise, then, to find his fingers in an ironlike grip that positively pained him. Perkins smiled as he felt Andy wince under the pressure.

"You've got the strongest hand of any lady I ever met," said Andy, with a smile.

"Suppose I get a grip on Mike Hogan?" suggested Perkins.

"I think he would find it hard to get away."

"He is the man I want. The other is of little consequence, compared with Hogan. If I can take but one, I shall hold on to the older villain."

As they traveled over the road, Perkins entertained his young companion with scraps of personal adventure, borrowed from his ten years' experience as a detective. He closed by instructing Andy how to act if they should encounter the men whom they sought.

Meanwhile, Hogan and the young man he called Bill, had stationed themselves near the road, in the shelter of some underbrush.

"Are you sure there is no other road, Bill, by which the boy can come back? I should feel like a fool if he went another way, while we were lying in wait for him."

"No danger, Hogan. I found out about that before I started."

Presently their waiting was rewarded. The sound of carriage wheels was heard.

"Look out and see who it is, Bill," said Hogan.

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Bill peered through the leaves, looking cautiously up the road.

"It's the boy," he reported to his chief; "but he is not alone."

"Who is with him?" asked Mike.

"Only a woman."

"That won't make any difference."

"What do you want me to do, Hogan?"

"Stop the horse, and I'll attend to the passengers."

By direction of Perkins, Andy drove a little slower when he came to the lonely part of the road.

The slow speed satisfied Hogan and his companion that Andy did not apprehend any attack, and that he would be all the more surprised and disconcerted when confronted by them.

According to the plan they had agreed upon, Bill jumped from the covert, and, dashing across the road, seized the horse by the head, while Mike Hogan, big and burly, with a menacing air, approached the wagon.

"Do you know me, young bantam?" he demanded, grimly.

"I think I've seen you before," said Andy, not seeming so much surprised as the thief expected.

"Yes, curse you! and I've seen you. You played a scurvy trick upon me Saturday night."

"I couldn't help it," said Andy. "I didn't want to hurt you, but you drove me to it."

"So, so! Well, it was unlucky for you, for I'm going to take pay out of your hide."

"Pray don't!" entreated Andy. "Don't you see I have a lady here? Let me carry her home first."

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"Get down, ma'am, if you want to," Mike said. "I've got a score to settle with this young whelp."

Perkins took his hand lightly, and leaped to the ground.

The next moment he felt an iron grip at his collar, while the supposed lady held a revolver to his head.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed, in utter amazement, recoiling from his fair companion.

With his unoccupied hand the detective threw back the veil which concealed his face.

"Mike Hogan," he said, "I've caught you at last."

"Who are you?" gasped the tramp and burglar.

"I am Perkins, the detective!"

It was a name that Mike Hogan knew well, though Andy had never heard of it. He started to tear himself away, but the iron grip was not disturbed.

"Surrender, or it will be all over with you," exclaimed Perkins, sternly.

Mike Hogan turned for help to his companion, but at the dreaded name Bill had escaped into the woods.

"I surrender," said the tramp, doggedly.

With Andy's help, handcuffs were put on the captive, and he was hoisted into the back part of the buggy. The horse's head was turned, and Andy drove back to Cranston, where there was a jail.

I may as well add here that Hogan was duly tried, and sentenced to a term of years in the State's prison.

CHAPTER VIII

AN IMPORTANT PROPOSAL

When Mrs. Gordon heard of Andy's adventures during his ride to and from Cranston, she was naturally frightened.

"Oh, Andy!" she said, "I can't consent to your exposing yourself to be injured by such wicked men. You must tell the Peabody girls you can't go to the bank for them again."

"How much do you think the Peabodys are going to give me for my services?"

"Five dollars, perhaps."

"You will have to multiply five by ten!" said Andy.

"You don't mean to say you are to have fifty dollars?" ejaculated Mrs. Gordon, quite overpowered by surprise.

"Yes, I do. Toward night I'll go up and get the money. I didn't want to take it along to the bank, for I might have had that stolen, too."

"Certainly you are in luck, Andy," said his mother. "With what came in your poor father's wallet, we shall be very well off."

At this moment Andy espied a letter on the mantelpiece. It was inclosed in a yellow envelope, and addressed in an irregular, tremulous handwriting to his mother.

"What letter is that, mother?" he asked.

"I declare, Andy, I forgot to open it! Louis Shick brought it in an hour ago. He saw it at the

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post office and knew you were away, so he brought it along."

"I was mixing bread at the time, and my hands were all over dough, so I asked Louis to put it on the mantlepiece."

"You'd better open it, mother."

From her workbasket Mrs. Gordon took a pair of scissors, and with them cut open the envelope. She drew out the letter, when, to the amazement of Andy and herself, a bank note slipped out and fell to the carpet.

Andy stooped over and picked up the bank note.

"Why, mother, it's a fifty dollar bill!" he exclaimed.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Gordon had been looking to the end of the letter to discover who had written it.

"Andy," she said, "it's from an old uncle of mine, who lives near Buffalo, in the town of Cato."

"What's his name, mother?"

"Simon Dodge. He is the oldest brother of my mother. Uncle Simon never wrote letters, and so it happens that, for twenty-five years, none of us have heard anything of him."

"Read his letter, mother. Let us hear what the fifty dollars are for."

Mrs. Gordon began to read:

"MY DEAR NIECE: It is so long since you have heard from me, that you may have forgotten you had an uncle Simon. I have often wished that I could hear something of you and how you were prospering. It is only with difficulty I have learned your

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address and gleaned a little knowledge of you and your circumstances.

"The way it happened was this: I met, last week, a peddler who had been traveling in your neighborhood. He had visited Hamilton, and I found he knew something about you. He told me that you were poor, and that your good husband was dead, but that you were blessed in having a fine boy to be a help and comfort to you."

"As for me," the letter proceeded, "I am getting to be an old man. I am seventy-five years old, and, though my health is good and our family is long-lived—my father lived to be eighty-four—I feel that I have not long to live. I have had the good fortune to accumulate considerable property, besides the farm upon which I am living; but in spite of this, I find myself in a very uncomfortable position. I must explain to you how this happens.

"I had an only daughter—Sarah. She married a man named Brackett, and for a few years they lived in a small house in the village. But Brackett was a lazy and a shiftless man, and every year I had to help him, till at last I thought it would be cheaper taking him into my house and letting him help me look after the farm. My wife had died and I was willing to tolerate him for the sake of my daughter's presence in the house. Five years afterward, Sarah died, but Brackett still remained.

"Two years later he married a sharp, ill-tempered woman and brought her to the house. That was ten years ago. I ought to have given him notice to quit, but at the time of the marriage I was sick, and when

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I got well the new wife seemed to have become the mistress of the establishment.

"I have never been comfortable since. There are four children by this marriage, and they overrun the house. I was weak enough, a few years ago, to make over the place to Brackett, and now he and his wife are persecuting me to make a will, bequeathing them the rest of my property. This I will never do.

"Now, my dear niece, will you do me a favor? Send your boy to me, but let him take another name. I don't want it known or suspected that he is related to me. Though he is young, he can help me to carry out a plan I have in view, and to baffle my persecutors. I will take care that his services are recompensed. I enclose a fifty dollar bill to pay his expenses out here.

"I am tired, and must close.

"Your old uncle,

SIMON DODGE."

"P. S.—It will be a good idea to apply to Mr. Brackett for work—offering to come at very low wages. Brackett wants a boy, but he doesn't want to pay more than fifty cents a week. Do not answer this letter, if you send your son, as Mr. Brackett would find out that I had received a letter from your neighborhood, and his suspicions would be aroused."

"Poor uncle Simon!" said Mrs. Gordon, after the letter had been read. "He seems to be in a difficult position."

"Mother," said Andy, with a sudden thought. "who

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will get the property if Mr. Dodge dies without a will?"

"I suppose it would go to his relations."

"What other relations has he besides you?"

"I don't think he has any others," answered Mrs. Gordon.

"Then it may come to us."

"We have more right to it than Mr. Brackett," said his mother.

"Then," said Andy, after a short pause, "there must be a struggle between Brackett and me. I must go out to your uncle's help."

"I don't see what a boy like you can do, Andy."

"At any rate, I can try mother. This will pay my expenses out to Cato. When I get there I can form my plans."

"I don't see how I can spare you, Andy."

"Remember, mother, I am going in your behalf. Uncle Simon's money, which may amount to ten thousand dollars, may otherwise be taken from us."

"If you can induce Uncle Simon to come here and end his days with us, I will try to make him comfortable."

"A good idea, mother. I'll see if I can bring him."

"When do you want to start, Andy?"

"Not till after our good friend Joshua Starr has come for his money. I want to be here then, just to see how disappointed and mortified he will look when he sees the receipt with his signature attached."

On Tuesday afternoon, Joshua Starr called at the office of Brandon Ross, the lawyer.

"To-day's the day when we are to call on the

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Widder Gordon for my money, lawyer, isn't it?" he said.

"Yes, Mr. Starr. Do you propose to come with me?"

"Yes."

"It isn't necessary."

"You see, squire, I thought I could take a look at the furniture," suggested old Joshua, "and decide what I'll take. It ain't likely that the widder'll have the money to pay the note—at least, not all of it, and I'll have to take it out in what she's got."

CHAPTER IX

ANDY'S TRIUMPH OVER MR. STARR

"They're coming, mother," said Andy, as, looking from the window, he espied the bent form of old Joshua, with the sprucely dressed lawyer at his side, coming up the village street, and approaching their modest cottage.

"I wish the visit were over," said Mrs. Gordon. "Wouldn't it be well to save trouble by letting them know at once that we have found it, Andy?" asked the widow.

"No, mother; I want to make them show their hand first."

Andy had hardly completed this sentence, when a knock was heard at the door.

Mrs. Gordon opened it.

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"Good-afternoon, widder!" said Joshua Starr.

"Good-afternoon, Mrs. Gordon!" said the lawyer.

"We have called—Mr. Starr and myself—on a little matter of business."

"Won't you come in, gentlemen?" said Mrs. Gordon.

"Thank you!" said the lawyer.

And he bowed ceremoniously.

"I reckon we will," said Joshua Starr, who forgot to remove his battered hat as he entered.

The old man's eyes had already begun to wander about the room, in search of desirable furniture to seize in payment of the note. There was a comfortable rocking-chair in which the lawyer had seated himself, which he mentally decided to claim. It occurred to him that it would be just the thing for him to sit in after the farm work of the day was over.

"Of course, Mrs. Gordon, you are aware of the nature of the business that has brought us here?" said the lawyer. "It is about the note. Including interest, it amounts to——"

"One hundred and thirty-two dollars and twenty-seven cents," interrupted Joshua Starr, eagerly.

"I told you, Mr. Ross, that the note had been paid," said Mrs. Gordon, beginning to be a little nervous.

"I know you said so," the lawyer returned, "and you were doubtless under that impression, but my client, Mr. Starr, assures me that it is a mistake. The note still remains unpaid."

"You know better, Mr. Starr!" broke in Andy, hotly. "You are trying to get the note paid twice."

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"Young man," said the lawyer, severely, "this is very disgraceful! I cannot permit my respected client to be insulted by a boy."

"That's all nonsense, Andy," said Joshua. "I'll make it easy for you. I'm willin' to take part of my pay in furniture, and the rest your mother can pay, say five or ten dollars a month."

"My mother has no more furniture than she wants," said Andy, "and she wants all her income to live upon."

"That won't do," said the lawyer, sternly. "Your mother must make some arrangements this very afternoon to pay my client's note, or it will be necessary for me, in his behalf, to take some very unpleasant measures."

"There is one excellent reason for our not paying the note," said Andy, smiling.

"What is that?"

"It has already been paid, and we can show Mr. Starr's receipt."

The old man, his mouth wide open in astonishment and dismay, presented a ludicrous spectacle.

"'Taint so—'taint so!" said Mr. Starr.

"You will find that it is so, Mr. Starr," said Andy, firmly, "and that your wicked attempt to cheat my mother out of more than a hundred dollars has failed."

"These are bold words boy," Mr. Ross said. "We shall not believe in this receipt you talk about till you show it."

"Mr. Starr believes in it," retorted Andy, "for he

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knows very well he signed it; but he thought it was lost."

"I demand to see the receipt," said the lawyer.

"Let me see it," said Mr. Starr.

"I object to his taking it," interposed our hero.

"He has a right to see it," said Mr. Ross.

Joshua Starr took the paper in his hand, and gazed at it in a dazed way.

"The signatoor don't look genewine," he said, weakly.

"Doesn't it look like your writing?" said Andy.

"Well, mebbe it is, a little; but I guess it's a forgery. I dunno but you wrote it yourself, Andy."

"Do you believe that, Mr. Ross?" asked Andy, plainly.

"No," said the lawyer, with a glance of contempt at his client. "I believe it is Mr. Starr's signature."

Old Joshua's lower jaw dropped.

"You ain't a-goin' to desert me, squire, are you?"

As he spoke, he cunningly let go the receipt, giving it an impulse toward the open fireplace, where a fire was burning.

Andy, however, was on the watch, and he sprang forward and rescued the valuable document.

Though Mr. Ross was disappointed that he was unable to injure the Gordons by the agency of Mr. Starr, he felt that he could not afford to be implicated in the rascality which his client had attempted in his presence.

"Mrs. Gordon," he said rising from his chair, "you will do me the justice to believe that I had no knowledge of the existence of this receipt. I sup-

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posed Mr. Starr's claim was a genuine one, or I would not have meddled with it. It is not my intention to aid and abet rascality."

He strode out of the cottage, with a look of utter disgust on his face.

"I don't see what's the matter with the squire," said the old man. "He hadn't ought to leave me that way."

"Have you got any more business with us, Mr. Starr?" asked Andy.

"No—not as I know of. It's pretty hard for me to lose all that money."

"You can try to cheat somebody else out of it," said Andy coolly. "I wouldn't advise you to try us again."

"You're a cur'ous boy, Andy," said the old man, as he slowly rose and hobbled off, disappointed.

When Mr. Ross reached home, he found his son Herbert waiting eagerly to interview him.

"You've got back, pa?" said Herbert, by way of opening the conversation.

"Yes, I've got back!" said Mr. Ross, gruffly.

"I suppose Andy wasn't very glad to see you!" chuckled Herbert. "Did he have the money ready?"

"There was no need of his having any money ready," he said.

"Mr. Starr hasn't excused him from paying, has he?" inquired Herbert, anxiously.

"Mr. Starr is an old scoundrel!" exclaimed Mr. Ross.

"What has he done?"

"The note had been paid years ago, and he wanted

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to get it paid over again, and asked me to help him," said the lawyer with virtuous indignation.

"Then he can't collect pay?" asked Herbert.

"Of course he can't. How many times do you think a man is bound to pay a note?"

Herbert was not pleased with the way things had turned out, and he was puzzled at the remarkable change which had taken place in his father.

The next morning Mr. Ross sent a bill to Joshua Starr for professional services, setting the sum at fifteen dollars. This quickly brought the old man around to his office, in terrible dismay.

"You ain't in earnest, squire?" he said.

"About what?"

"About this bill."

"Mr. Starr, do you suppose I work for nothing? That bill must be paid."

"I won't pay it!" said the old man, obdurately.

"You won't, eh? Then I'll attach your farm."

Finally Joshua Starr had to pay the lawyer's charge.

Two days afterward, to the astonishment of everyone except his mother and Dr. Euclid, whom he took into his confidence, Andy Gordon left Hamilton, and was not seen in the village again for several weeks.

CHAPTER X

ANDY LEAVES HOME

Andy had to consider what name he would assume in place of his own.

His mother did not like the idea of his changing his name.

"It looks as if you had something to be ashamed of," she said.

"But, mother, it seems to be necessary. That man Brackett knows that uncle Simon has relations, and it is likely that he knows our name. If I should appear as Andy Gordon, he would know the name, and be suspicious of me, so that I could not help uncle at all."

"I suppose it must be, then," she said. "What name have you thought of?"

"I have not thought of any yet, but it can't be very hard to find one. Names are plenty enough."

"I'll tell you what, mother," he said at last. "Haven't you an old paper here, somewhere?"

One was found.

"I am going to find a name somewhere in this paper," said Andy, and forthwith he began to examine critically the crowded columns.

He paused at a paragraph, recording the bravery of a boy named Henry Miller, who had saved a younger boy from drowning, somewhere in Massachusetts. This struck Andy favorably.

"Mother," he said, "let me introduce myself to you as Henry Miller."

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"Do you like the name?" asked his mother, doubtfully.

"Not particularly, but it is the name of a brave boy, and so is an honorable name. I shouldn't like a bad name, like Benedict Arnold, for instance."

"What did Henry Miller do?"

"He saved a boy from drowning."

So it was decided that Andy, as soon as he left Hamilton, should be known as Henry Miller.

He had intended to buy a new suit of clothes, but as he was about to assume the character of a poor boy, wandering about the country in search of employment, that hardly would be worth while.

He decided to wear his everyday clothes, and carry his best in a bundle, with some necessary underclothing.

Andy found on inquiry that the town of Cato, where his great-uncle lived, was nearly four hundred miles distant.

Of course, there would be no occasion to assume his character till he got nearly there.

From a railroad guide he ascertained the name of a place about fifteen miles from Cato, and bought a ticket to that place.

We will call this place Seneca, though that was not the name.

Before leaving Hamilton it was not only proper but incumbent on Andy to call on Dr. Euclid, and resign his post as janitor.

"Going to leave us, Andrew?" said the doctor, in a tone of regret. "I am sorry to hear it. Can't you stay till the end of the term?"

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"No, sir; I shall have to go at once," answered Andy.

"If it is any money embarrassment," said the doctor, kindly, "don't let that influence you. I shall be very glad to assist you, if you will allow me."

Dr. Euclid spoke in a tone of kindness and delicate sympathy which could hardly have been expected of the stern master at whose frown so many boys trembled.

Andy was exceedingly grateful, and felt that he ought to say so.

"Thank you for your great kindness, Dr. Euclid," said Andy; "but it isn't that—though it does relate to money. Though it is a secret, I have a great mind to tell you."

"Do as you please, Andrew. I shall, of course, respect your confidence, and perhaps I may be able to advise you for your benefit."

Upon this, Andy told the doctor the whole story, reading him his uncle's letter, which he happened to have in his pocket.

"It is a serious undertaking, my boy," said the doctor. "Do you think you are equal to it?"

"I may be self-conceited, Dr. Euclid, but I think I am," answered Andy.

"I would not call it self-conceit," said the doctor, slowly, "but a spirit of confidence which may be justified by events. Have you any plan of proceedings?"

"No, sir; except to follow uncle Simon's instructions, and try to get a place in Mr. Brackett's employ, where I can be ready to be of service."

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"I suspect you won't find the place an easy one. Probably this Mr. Brackett will make you work hard."

"I am afraid so," laughed Andy; "but I will remember that I am working for a higher reward than fifty cents a week which uncle writes that I may be paid."

"On the whole," said the doctor, "I think you are acting right. You have a good end in view, and, what is very important, you are leaving home with your mother's knowledge and with her permission. Were it otherwise, I should think you were acting decidedly wrong."

"I should not think of leaving home without mother's permission," said Andy, promptly.

"Quite right, my boy," said the doctor, kindly. "I am sorry to say that in these days of juvenile independence not all boys are so considerate. Well Andrew, you have my best wishes for your success. I hope we may soon see you home again, and your uncle with you."

"That is what I shall try for," answered Andy. "I would like to get him out of the clutches of that man Brackett."

On his way home, Andy did not take the most direct route, but, crossing the fields, walked along the shores of Brewster's Pond—a sheet of water only half a mile across, but quite deep in parts.

As he reached the shore of the pond, he heard a scream, and, quickly looking round, saw a boat, bottom up, and a boy clinging desperately to it. The boat was only a hundred and fifty feet away.

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Andy was an expert swimmer, and he did not hesitate a moment. Throwing off his coat, he plunged into the water and swam out to the boat with a strong and sturdy stroke.

He reached the boy just in time, for he was about to let go his hold, his strength having been overtaxed.

Then, for the first time, Andy saw that the boy whom he was attempting to rescue was Herbert Ross.

"Rest your hand on my shoulder, Herbert," he said, "but don't grasp me so that I can't swim."

Herbert gladly obeyed instructions, and, with some difficulty, Andy helped him to land.

"Now, Herbert, go home at once, or you will catch your death of cold," said Andy.

"I am much obliged to you," replied Herbert, shivering. "Here, take that."

Andy could hardly believe his eyes when the boy, whose life he had saved, offered him a twenty-five cent piece.

"No, thank you!" he said smiling. "I don't need any reward."

"I would rather you would take it."

"It is quite impossible," said Andy, shortly. "I advise you to go home as fast as you can."

"What a mean boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Gordon, when Andy, who came home wet through, told her of the munificent sum offered him.

"I don't know," said Andy, smiling. "Herbert understands best the value of his own life. But, mother, now that this has happened, I shall feel

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quite justified in taking the name of Henry Miller, for I, too, have saved a boy from drowning."

The next day he started on his journey.

It was a bright, pleasant morning when Andy left Seneca for the town of Cato, where his great-uncle lived. He had arrived in Seneca the evening previous, and passed the night at the village inn, where he had obtained two meals and lodging for seventy-five cents.

"Where be you going?" asked the landlord—a stout and good-natured looking man.

"I guess I'll travel a little further," said Andy, smiling.

"Ain't you got no folks? Isn't your father or mother living?"

"Yes; I have a mother."

"I s'pose you're seeking your fortune, ain't you?"

"A little of that," said Andy; "but, you see, I like to travel."

"I'll tell you what I'll do. You seem a spry, active boy. If you'll stay here and make yourself useful about the house and stable, I'll give you all you can eat and five dollars a month. Now, what do you say?"

"I wouldn't mind working for you," said Andy, "only I want to travel a little further."

So Andy began to trudge along the road toward Cato. It was rather a lonely road, with only here and there a house, but there were signboards, so that there was no danger of losing the way. Andy took it easy, now and then throwing himself down by the side of the road to rest.

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It took him four hours to accomplish ten miles. By this time he was quite hungry, and would have been glad to come across a hotel.

It was at this point that he saw approaching him a boy, apparently about his own age, with a shock of bright red hair, a freckled face, and a suit of clothes of unknown antiquity. He, too, had a small bundle, put up in a red cotton handkerchief.

"Good-morning, Johnny!" said Andy.

"My name ain't Johnny; it's Peter.

"Where do you come from?" asked Andy.

"From Cato."

"Just what I wanted," thought Andy. "He can give me some information. Won't you sit down and rest a little while with me?"

"I dunno but I will. Where are you goin'?" asked Peter, his face expressing curiosity.

"What is the nearest place?"

"Cato."

"Then I guess I'll go there."

"I wouldn't."

"Don't you like the place?"

"The place is good enough; but I worked for an awful mean man."

"Who was it?" asked Andy.

"His name is Brackett. Ain't he mean, though? But his wife's just as bad. Jaw, jaw, jaw, all the time. I couldn't stand it, so I left."

"That's encouraging," thought Andy. "Was there anyone else in the family?"

"There was four children—reg'lar terrors! I'd like to choke 'em!"

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"I suppose there was no one else in the family?"

"Yes, there was an old gentleman—a nice old man, he was! I wouldn't have minded workin' for him. He always had a good word for me."

"What was the name of the old man?"

"Mr. Dodge. I guess it's he that owns the property; but Lor'! he don't have anything to say about it. Brackett and his wife have things all their own way."

"I suppose he paid you well?"

"He paid me seventy-five cents a week and kept groanin' over the big wages he was a-payin'! He wanted to get me for fifty cents!"

Poor Peter looked sad.

"I'm awful hungry," he said.

"So am I, Peter. But I don't see any chance to get dinner, even if we had ever so much money."

"We could git some over yonder," said Peter, pointing to a farmhouse some way back from the road. "Only we might have to pay for it."

"Then come along," said Andy. "Let's go there."

Peter hung back.

"You see, I don't want to spend all my money," he said. "I ain't got but twenty-five cents."

"It shan't cost you a cent. I will pay for both our dinners."

"You will?" exclaimed Peter, gladly. "Have you got money enough?"

"Oh, yes, I've got enough for that."

"Then come along!"

Five minutes later they were knocking at the door of the farmhouse.

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A woman, who had evidently been busy getting dinner, came to the door.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Madam," said Andy, pulling off his hat politely, "my friend and I are hungry, and——"

"We ain't got anything for tramps," said the woman.

"But," said Andy, in unfailing good humor, "we are not what you suppose. We don't want you to give us a dinner," he said; "but to sell us one. I have money and will pay you in advance, if you like."

"Have you any money?" she asked.

"To be sure. How much shall I pay you?" and Andy brought out his pocketbook.

"A quarter apiece, I reckon. I've only got sassidges and pie for dinner, but it ought to be wuth that."

"Step right in," said the widow, with sudden civility. "Dinner will be ready in a jiffy. Here, you Mary Ann, dish up them sassidges, and fry some more. There's two young gentlemen goin' to dine with us."

CHAPTER XI

ANDY ARRIVES IN CATO

Mary Ann was an overgrown girl with red arms and prominent knuckles, and no personal beauty to

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speak of. She was good-natured, however, and thus had an advantage over her mother.

She stared at the two guests as they sat up to the table, and was evidently favorably impressed by the appearance of Andy, who was a good-looking boy. Peter did not appear to please her so much, and merely received a look.

Mrs. Simpson was bustling about the kitchen and adjoining room, and left Mary Ann to entertain her guests. The girl showed her partiality for Andy by putting three sausages on his plate, and only two on Peter's; but the latter took no notice of the discrimination but set to work at once on his share.

Mary Ann looked at Andy with what she meant to be an engaging smile, though it looked more like a broad grin.

"I hope you like the sassidges?" she said.

"They are very good, thank you," replied Andy, politely.

He spoke correctly, for Mrs. Simpson was famed for the excellence of her sausages, of which she annually made a large stock, part of which were sent to market.

"They was made out of one of our best hogs," said Mary Ann, with engaging frankness.

"I don't think I ever ate better," said Andy.

"They're hunky," chimed in Peter, with his mouth full.

"Is you travelin' far?" asked Mary Ann, who was not very well versed in grammar.

"Not very," answered Andy.

"Be you a peddler?"

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"No; but I may take up the business some time."

"If you ever do, be sure to call round and see us, whenever you come our way," said the young lady.

"I certainly will. I shan't forget your nice sausages."

"Won't you have another?" asked Mary Ann, looking pleased.

"No, thank you."

"I will," said Peter.

Mary Ann supplied his wants, though not with as good a grace as she would have done for his companion.

"I guess you'll have some pie?" she suggested to Andy.

"Thank you."

A liberal slice of apple pie was put on his plate. Andy would have preferred a clean plate, as sausages and apple pie do not go well together, but he did not care to be so particular.

The pie was good, also, and our hero, whose appetite was of that kind sometimes described as "healthy," felt that he was getting his full money's worth. As for Peter, he ate as if he were ravenous, and, not being engaged in conversation, like Andy, was able to give his undivided attention to the subject in hand.

"How are you gettin' on, young men?" asked Mrs. Simpson, as she passed through the room.

"Bully" mumbled Peter, whose utterance was somewhat impeded by the half section of apple pie which he had thrust into his mouth.

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"Your daughter is taking excellent care of us," said Andy.

Mary Ann looked delighted at this tribute to her attention, and mentally pronounced Andy the handsomest and most polite boy she had ever chanced to meet.

"What is your name?" she inquired.

"You may call me Henry Miller," said Andy.

"That's a nice name," said Mary Ann.

"Do you think so?" asked Andy, smiling.

"I've got a nice name myself," said Peter, complacently.

"What's your name?" asked the young lady.

"My name's Peter Jenks."

"I don't like it," said Mary Ann, decidedly, looking unfavorably at the red-headed boy.

"You wouldn't like to be Mrs. Jenks?" asked Peter.

"No, I wouldn't. I don't want to marry no red head."

"Maybe you'd like him better," said Peter, pointing to Andy. "I guess anybody would."

Andy was amused. He saw that he had made a conquest of the young lady, but did not feel much flattered. He would have been perfectly willing to transfer all her admiration to his companion, if the young lady had been willing.

When the dinner was over the two boys rose from the table, and bidding good-bye to Mary Ann and her mother, left the farmhouse.

"I say, that was a hunky dinner," said Peter.

"It was very good, indeed."

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"It was enough sight better than I got at old Brackett's."

"Don't they live well there?"

"No, they don't. The old woman ain't much of a cook. Besides she's mean."

"By the way, Peter," said Andy, with a sudden thought, "how would you like to work at a hotel?"

"First-class!" answered Peter, promptly.

"Were you ever in Seneca?"

"Once."

"The landlord of the hotel there offered me a place to work around the hotel and stable, for five dollars a month and board."

"I wish I could get a job like that," said Peter, wistfully.

"I think you can. Go straight there, and tell the landlord you were sent to him by a boy you met on the road. He'll know it was I who sent you, and I shouldn't wonder if you'd get the place."

"I'll do it," said Peter, with a look of determination. "I'm much obliged to you for the dinner you've given me."

"Oh, you are quite welcome. I suppose we part here. Of course you'll go right on to Seneca, while I trudge on to Cato."

"Yes," said Peter. "I'll try for that place before night."

"I hope you get it."

So the two boys parted, and Andy kept on. There was plenty of time to get to Cato, for he was not over five miles away.

"I guess I'll go round to see Mr. Brackett to-night,"

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thought our hero, "so as to reach him before he has had a chance to hire another boy."

Arrived in the village, Andy walked slowly along the road, keeping his eyes wide open.

A little in advance of him he saw an old man, with white hair, who was walking slowly, and appeared rather feeble.

"I shouldn't be surprised if that is Uncle Simon," he thought. "I'll speak to him, and try to find out."

The old man was Simon Dodge, and he was in daily expectation of the appearance of his niece's son.

When he saw Andy, in his traveling garb, with his little bundle of clothes under his arm, his eyes lighted up with hope, and he immediately accosted him.

"Where are you traveling my boy?" he asked, eagerly.

"I have come from the East," answered Andy. "I shall stay here, if I can find a place."

"Would you be willing to work on a farm?" asked the old man.

"Yes," answered our hero. "I hear that there is a farmer named Brackett who wants to hire a boy. Do you know where he lives?"

"Yes—yes, I can tell you. I am Mr. Brackett's father-in-law," said the old man, quickly.

Andy looked about him cautiously, to make sure that no one could overhear him, and said, in a low voice:

"Then you are my mother's uncle—Mr. Dodge!"

"So I thought!" he answered. "I thought you were

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Mary's son as soon as I looked at you. My dear boy, I am glad, heartily glad, to see you!"

"I am glad to see you, Uncle Simon!" he said. "I hope I may be able to be of service to you."

"You seem like a strong, active boy," said the old man. "What is your name?"

"Andrew Gordon; they generally call me Andy."

"I should like to call you by that name, but it will be more prudent to go by some other."

"You may call me Henry Miller, Uncle Simon."

"Henry Miller? I will try to remember it. But you mustn't call me Uncle Simon; that would ruin all, if Mr. Brackett should hear it."

"I'll be cautious—never fear! Can you advise me how to act? Shall I call at the farm to-night?"

"Yes. Mr. Brackett is looking out for a boy. His boy left him this morning."

"I know it."

"You know it?" said the old man, in surprise. "How did you hear of it?"

"I met Peter on the road and treated him to a dinner."

"I am afraid you won't like the place," said Mr. Dodge, anxiously. "But bear in mind, you shall have all the money you want, only Brackett mustn't know anything about it. We will have a secret understanding together, Andy—I mean Henry."

"Uncle Simon," said, Andy, boldly, "why do you stay here with this man? My mother asked me to invite you to come back with me to Hamilton. Our house is small, but we can make room for you."

"Will your mother be really willing to be troubled

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with me for the little time I have to stay on earth?" asked Mr. Dodge.

"She will be glad to have you with us," answered Andy.

"It is what has come into my mind, my boy," said the old man; "but I was afraid your mother wouldn't like it. Mr. and Mrs. Brackett are continually asking me for money and scheming to have me leave them what money I have left. Only this morning, Brackett was urging me to make a will. for he knows that, if I die, he is no relative of mine, and the law wouldn't give him the money."

"You have given him the farm already, haven't you, Uncle Simon?"

"Yes; and a good farm it is. I not only gave it to him, but I gave him the stock and tools, and all I asked in return was that I should receive my board."

"Uncle Simon," Andy said, "you treat him altogether too well. I wouldn't give in to him that way."

They had been walking slowly. At a point in the road the prospect widened out before them.

"That is where we live," said the old man, pointing to a farmhouse, perhaps a quarter of a mile away. "We had better separate here, for it is not best that Mr. Brackett should suppose there is any understanding or acquaintance between us. You might come round in about an hour and apply for the place. Be prepared to accept fifty cents a week."

"All right!"

And he sat down by the side of the road to rest,

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for he was really tired, while the old man bent his steps toward home.

Mr. Brackett, a loose-jointed, shambling figure of a man, was leaning against the well curb, smoking a pipe, when his wife appeared at the back door and called out:

"Jeremiah! I want some firewood, right off! I should like to know how you expect me to cook your supper without wood to burn."

"Send Tom out for some."

Tom was the eldest of Mr. Brackett's children, and had now attained the age of eight years.

"So I have; and he says there isn't any split," said Mrs. Brackett. "Just fly around and saw and split some, or I shall have the fire out."

Mr. Brackett took the pipe from his mouth and sauntered toward the wood pile in a very discontented frame of mind.

The fact was, Mr. Brackett was a lazy man, and considered that in superintending others he was doing all that could be expected of him.

Peter had milked three of the six cows, foddered them, cleaned out the stalls, sawed and split the wood, and done the numberless chores Mrs. Brackett found for him, besides doing a share of the farm-work.

Jeremiah Brackett began to ply the saw and axe, knowing that his supper depended upon it, and soon little Tommy was able to carry in an armful to his mother.

He sawed a little more, and then resumed his smoking.

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"It's slave, slave all the time!" he muttered. "The old man might help me a little, now that I've lost Peter."

It would have occurred to anyone else that at the age of seventy-five a man might have been allowed to rest; but Mr. Brackett was intensely selfish and grudged his father-in-law his well-earned leisure.

"If the old man would only give me two thousand dollars in money," he reflected, "it would make me easy. Of course, it's coming to me some time—there isn't anybody else that has any claim—but it looks as if he meant to live forever."

He was still smoking when Simon Dodge, fresh from his interview with Andy, entered the yard.

"Been out walking, father?" asked Brackett.

He was careful never to let the old man forget the relationship which existed between them, though, in truth, there was no relationship at all.

"Yes, Jeremiah, I must take a little exercise, so as not to get stiff in the joints."

"I have plenty of exercise at home," grumbled Brackett. "I have had to attend to all Peter's chores, in addition to my own work."

"Oh, well, you'll get another boy soon," said old Simon.

"There ain't any money to be made by farming," muttered Brackett.

"That wasn't my experience," said Mr. Dodge. "When I was twenty-five I inherited this farm from my father; but there was a debt of three thousand dollars on it, which I was to pay my brother for his share. I hadn't a cent outside. Well, I worked

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hard, and I waited patiently, and in time paid off the mortgage I put on it to pay my brother, and when I gave it up to you, it was in good condition and well stocked. You started a good deal better off than I did."

"I don't know how it is," said Brackett, "but I'm always hard up."

Mrs. Brackett had five hundred dollars in a savings bank, which, in spite of his laziness, Brackett, with her help, had been able to save.

The two had decided that Mr. Dodge was on no account to know anything of this, as it might prevent his doing anything for them; but the old man had learned it indirectly. So, when they pleaded poverty, he remained politely silent.

"Father," said Brackett, "will you lend me fifty dollars for six weeks, till I've had a chance to sell some of my grain?"

"I think you will have to look for the money somewhere else," replied his father-in-law.

Simon Dodge left his son-in-law, and entered the house.

"How the old miser hangs on to his money!" growled Brackett. "He's getting more and more selfish and mean as he grows older. I wish he'd make his will. If he should die now, I'm afraid them Eastern relatives would be after the property."

Just then, however, his attention was drawn to a boy with a bundle under his arm, who was entering the gate. It was Andy.

CHAPTER XII

ANDY IS ENGAGED

Jeremiah Brackett brightened up as his glance took in the strong, sturdy figure of our hero.

He stood very little chance of securing the services of a boy belonging to the village, for his penurious disposition was too well known; but here was a stranger, who knew nothing about him, and who was probably in search of employment.

"Is this Mr. Brackett?" asked Andy, politely.

"Yes; that's my name."

"I was told you wanted to hire a boy."

"Who told you so?"

"A boy I met on the road."

"Was his name Peter?"

"I believe he said so."

"A lazy, shiftless boy!" said Brackett, warmly. "He had a good place here, and I looked after him as if he had been my own son; but he didn't do his duty."

"He didn't say anything about that," said Andy.

"No, I reckon not. Did he say anything about me?" asked Brackett.

"He said you and he couldn't get along very well."

"All his own fault," returned the farmer, who wished to remove any prejudice which Peter's story may have excited in the mind of Andy. "He had as nice a home as any boy would want, and easy work; but some boys are never satisfied. Was you looking for work?"

"I thought I might hire out for a while."

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"What do you call yourself?"

"Henry Miller."

"Was you raised near here?"

"Not very."

"Did you ever work on a farm?"

"I have worked a little in that way."

"Can you milk?"

"Yes."

"The next question is, how much do you calculate to get?" asked Brackett, cautiously.

"Peter told me how much you gave him," said Andy.

Mr. Brackett was glad to hear this, as he knew that Andy knew what his predecessor had received.

"Yes," he said, with the air of a liberal man, "I gave Peter fifty cents a week, though he wasn't really worth it. Fifty cents and board, and lodgings, and washing," he added, by way of making the salary seem as munificent as possible.

"It doesn't seem to me very high pay," said Andy, who thought it politic to drive a bargain.

"Remember, you're only a boy," said Mr. Brackett, "and boys can't do as much as men. Fifty cents is excellent pay for a boy of—how old be you?"

"Sixteen."

"For a boy of sixteen. Of course, when you're a man grown, you can get a good deal more. Why, I pay one man as much as a dollar and a quarter a day!"

"Would I have to work very hard?" asked Andy.

"Oh, no! Just enough for healthy exercise," said Brackett, in a light, cheerful tone. "It does boys

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good to use their limbs. I was a dreadful hard worker when I was a boy."

"You look as if you'd been tired ever since," said Andy to himself, as he watched the lounging attitude of his future employer.

"You'll have a nice, pleasant home," continued Mr. Brackett—"plenty of life and fun. I've got four beautiful children, that'll look upon you as a brother. Mrs. Brackett, who is a perfect lady, will take an interest in you and make you feel at home."

Before Andy could reply, Mrs. Brackett made her appearance at the back door.

"Jeremiah!" she screamed. "I want some more wood—quick!"

"All right, Lucindy. Well, what do you say? Will you come?"

"I'll try it a week," said Andy.

"Then you can begin by sawing and splitting some wood. There's the wood pile, and there's the saw and axe. You'd better work up a pretty good quantity."

"Well, I've got rid of that job," thought Brackett, with a sigh of relief. "He looks like a good, strong boy. I hope I'll be able to keep him."

It was not till supper-time that Andy was introduced to the members of Mr. Brackett's family.

"I hope you'll do better than the last boy," said Mrs. Brackett.

"I hope so," said Andy.

Here Mr. Dodge entered the room.

"Father, I've hired a new boy," said Mr. Brackett.

"I see you have," replied the old man, demurely,

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looking at Andy as if he had never seen him before.

"What's his name?"

"Henry Miller."

"I am glad to see you, Henry," said the old gentleman, with a smile.

"Thank you, sir!"

Later in the evening he got a chance to speak a few words, unobserved, with the old gentleman.

"How do you think you shall like staying here?"

"I wouldn't stay a day longer if it were not for you, sir."

"Thank you, Henry! You are a good boy. I shan't stay long myself, but there are some things I must attend to before I can go away."

Here Brackett came in sight, and the two separated, not wishing to excite suspicion.

Andy soon found that his position was by no means an easy one. Though Mr. Brackett was a very lazy man himself, he had no notion of allowing his hired boy to imitate his example. Even if he had been inclined to be indulgent, Mrs. Brackett would have taken care that Andy had enough to do. She had taken a dislike to our hero.

"I don't know what you think, Mr. Brackett," said his wife, one day, about a week after Andy's term of service began, "but I consider that new boy of yours an impudent, good-for-nothing upstart!"

"He is a good worker, Lucindy," said Mr. Brackett. "He does more work than any boy I ever had."

"Maybe he does and maybe he doesn't, but that ain't the point."

"It is the point with me, my dear. Between our-

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selves, we get him very cheap. I don't believe I could get another boy that would do so much work for fifty cents a week."

"Fifty cents a week seems to me very good wages," answered Mrs. Brackett, whose ideas of compensation were not very liberal.

"I think it's enough myself for any ordinary boy; but Henry is uncommonly smart."

"He feels uncommon smart, I can tell you that, retorted the lady. "Why, Brackett, he seems to consider himself of as much importance as either you or I."

"Well, Lucindy," continued Brackett, in a pacific tone, "it doesn't make any difference to us what the boy thinks of himself. If he chooses to make himself ridiculous by his airs, why, let him, for all I care. What do you expect me to do, anyway?"

"I expect you to teach that boy his place."

"If I don't treat him well he won't stay. He'll leave me all of a sudden, as Peter did."

"Then you can get another boy."

"That isn't so easily done as you suppose. I can't get any of the boys round here to work for me—I'm sure I don't know why—and new ones don't come along every day. I don't fancy being left without one to do the chores myself."

"If you did them all, you wouldn't work as hard as I do," said his wife, contemptuously, and not altogether without a basis of truth.

"You can't expect a woman to know anything about a man's work," said Mr. Brackett, in a complacent tone of superiority.

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"I know I could do all your work, and get done in half the day," said his wife.

Mr. Brackett shrugged his shoulders, and was about to saunter off, when his father-in-law made his appearance.

"Mr. Brackett," said he, "if you can spare Henry and your team, I would like to have him drive me over to Jefferson this afternoon."

"Really, father," said Brackett, who did not like the proposal, for it would throw upon his shoulders some of Andy's work, "I'd like to oblige you, but it would be very inconvenient. You see, Henry's got his work to do, and——"

"I didn't ask it as a favor," said Mr. Dodge. "I mean to pay you for the boy's services, and also for the team."

"Let father have the boy and team," said Mrs. Brackett. "You can spare them."

"It would be worth as much as two dollars," said Brackett.

"I will pay you two dollars," said Simon Dodge.

Here a new and brilliant idea struck Mr. Brackett, and he said, briskly:

"I'll tell you what, father; I'll drive you over myself instead of Henry, and I won't charge you a cent more, even if my time is more valuable than his."

"Thank you for your kind offer," said the old man, quietly, "but I can't accept it."

"You mean you'd rather have the boy drive you?" asked Mr. Brackett, in amazement.

"I would," answered his father-in-law, candidly.

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"Really, that doesn't seem friendly," said Mr. Brackett.

"I generally like to have my own way, Jeremiah," said Mr. Dodge, quietly. "I don't mind allowing you two dollars and a half, which is more than I should need to pay at the stable. Is it yes or no?"

"Oh, of course, I agree," said Brackett, rather disappointed. "Do you want to go now?"

"Yes."

Doubtful as to how much information they could extract from Andy, a sharp plan suggested itself to Mrs. Brackett.

"Father," said she, "have you any objection to taking Tommy along with you? The dear boy loves to be with his granpa, and he can sit between you and Henry. He doesn't take up much room."

"I won't take him this afternoon, Lucinda," said Mr. Dodge, mildly.

Mrs. Brackett was displeased, and, though she did not venture to say anything more, she showed by her manner that she considered her poor boy was slighted.

The team was soon ready, and the old man rode off with our hero.

Mr. and Mrs. Brackett looked after them, with a look of baffled curiosity.

"What does this mean, Jeremiah?" asked his wife, at last.

"I've been thinkin' that perhaps father is going to make his will this afternoon."

"Jeremiah, do you think there is any fear of his

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leaving his property to them relations of his in the East?"

"I can't say, but I guess not. He never hears from them. Like as not, he doesn't know where they live."

"We must find out, some way, whether he makes a will, and what's in it," said Mrs. Brackett, nodding vigorously. "When they get home, try to get it out of the boy what the old man did, and where he went."

"I will, Lucindy."

CHAPTER XIII

WHAT MR. DODGE DID IN JEFFERSON

When they were fairly started, Mr. Dodge said:

"Henry, probably Mr. and Mrs. Brackett will cross-examine you on your return, to learn where I went and what I did. They are very curious on that subject—so much so that Mr. Brackett offered to drive me over himself."

"I won't tell them," said Andy, very promptly.

"You might find it a little awkward to refuse," said the old man, "and for this reason I will not tell you precisely."

"That will be the best way," answered Andy, who was not troubled by idle curiosity.

"I will only say that the business I have to do will help prepare the way for our departure."

"I am glad of that, sir, for I don't much enjoy being in Mr. Brackett's employment."

"It will soon be over, Henry, and I will take care

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that you lose nothing by what you are doing in my behalf."

"I don't want to be paid for that, Uncle Simon."

"Have you heard from your mother since you came here?"

"No, sir; I have not dared to write, for fear the letter might be seen by Mr. Brackett or his wife."

"You shall have an opportunity of writing from Jefferson. We will drive directly to the hotel and put up our team. You can write your letter in the hotel while I am out attending to my business."

Andy was very glad of this permission, for he knew that his mother would feel anxious till she had heard of his safe arrival.

When the team was disposed of, Andy entered the hotel office.

Jefferson was the shire town of the county, and was therefore at times the resort of a considerable number of visitors. For this reason it required and possessed a very commodious hotel.

At the desk Andy saw a pleasant-looking boy of about his own age, whose name, as he afterward learned, was George Tierney. The boy looked social and friendly, and he addressed him.

"Can you let me have a sheet of paper and an envelope?" he asked.

"Certainly," said George briskly. "Do you want to write a letter?"

"Yes, I should like to do so."

"You will find a table and ink in there," said George, pointing to a small room leading from the office. "Of course you will want a postage stamp."

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"Yes, I would like one."

George produced one, and Andy paid for it. Then our hero, who had thought of a plan for carrying on a correspondence with his mother, asked:

"Would you be willing to do me a favor?"

"Of course I would," said George, pleasantly—that is, unless you want to borrow a thousand dollars," he added, with a laugh. "I could not oblige you there."

"It isn't anything of that kind. I want to know if I may have a letter directed to me in your care?"

"Of course; but why don't you have it sent to where you live?"

"There is an objection which I can't mention just now."

"Where do you live?"

"Over at Cato. I am working for Mr. Brackett, a farmer."

George whistled.

"I thought so when I saw you with Mr. Dodge," he said. "I worked there once myself."

"You did? How long did you stay?" inquired Andy, with interest.

"I stood it a week," laughed George, "and then left. I came here, where I have an excellent place. Mr. Jones, the landlord, treats me tiptop."

"I should think you'd like it a good deal better."

"Can't you get a better place?" asked George, in a tone of sympathy.

"I am willing to stay for the present," said Andy, "Mr. Dodge is kind to me."

"Yes, he is a kind man. If Brackett had been as

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good, I would have stayed longer, though I only got fifty cents a week. Did you ever hear of such mean pay?"

"That's what I get myself," answered Andy.

"You won't get rich on it very soon."

"No, I don't expect to."

Andy went into the adjoining room and wrote his letter. He had finished it, and given it to George Tierney to mail, when Mr. Dodge returned.

Though the old gentleman did not mention the nature of the business in which he had been engaged, we may state that he had been to the office of a lawyer with whom he had for years been on friendly and confidential terms, and there executed a will, which gave his entire property, invested in stocks and bonds, to his niece, Mrs. Gordon, in trust for Andy, to become the property of our hero when he should have attained his majority. He named the lawyer as his executor.

"There," he said, when the document was duly signed and attested, "that takes a burden from my mind."

"What would the Bracketts say if they knew what you have done this day?" said the lawyer, smiling; for between him and his client there were no secrets.

"They have no right to feel disappointed," said the old man, "for I have acted very generously by them. I gave them half of all I had, and I didn't wait till my death to do it."

"You have dealt a good deal more generously by them than I would have done," said the lawyer, emphatically.

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"If it were to do over again, I would act differently; but what is done can't be undone. Perhaps it is all for the best."

On the way home Mr. Dodge seemed to be in unusually good spirits. As he had said to the lawyer, he felt that a burden had been lifted from his mind. He had made his will and provided that his property should go where he wished it to go, and felt no further anxiety on that point.

But if he felt no anxiety, Mr. and Mrs. Brackett did.

They felt that something was in the wind. Mr. Dodge must have some object in going to Jefferson and refusing the company of his son-in-law, and even of dear Tommy.

They waited patiently for the return of the team, and were on the alert when it drove into the yard.

"Did you have a pleasant ride, father?" asked Brackett.

"Yes, Jeremiah, thank you."

"Did you attend to all your business, or will you want the horse another day?"

"I didn't say I went on business," said the old man, shrewdly. "I may want the horse another day. Here is your money, Jeremiah."

Mr. Brackett extended his hand with alacrity, and took the proffered two dollars and a half, which he put in his pocket.

"You can have it any time, father," he said. "I'm always ready to oblige you."

Mr. Dodge went into the house, leaving Andy in the hands of his son-in-law.

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"Did father call round much over in Jefferson, Henry?" asked Mr. Brackett, with an assumption of careless indifference.

"No, sir," answered Andy, demurely.

"Where did he go?" pursued Brackett, in the same tone, but with an expression of restrained eagerness.

"He drove right to the hotel," answered Andy.

"Yes, but after that?"

"He put up the horse there, and left me at the hotel."

"He did!" ejaculated Brackett, disappointed.

"Yes."

"Did he leave the hotel?"

"Yes, but he didn't tell me where he went."

Brackett looked hard at Andy, to see if he were keeping anything back, but our hero's manner was perfectly honest and sincere, and he was forced to conclude that the boy knew nothing more than himself of Mr. Dodge's errand.

"I didn't think father was so sharp," said Brackett to his wife. "He wouldn't let the boy know where he went."

But Mr. Brackett had his curiosity satisfied, after all. One of his neighbors had been over to Jefferson the same afternoon, and reported to the farmer that he had seen Mr. Dodge coming out of the office of Mr. Brief, the lawyer.

"What was he doing there?" thought Brackett, perplexed. "Did he make a will? That's what I would like to know."

But that was a question more easily asked than answered.

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The next day Mr. Brackett decided to attack Mr. Dodge on the subject of the will.

"How do you feel, father?" he inquired.

"Very well, thank you, Jeremiah," said Mr. Dodge, rather surprised at his son-in-law's solicitude.

"You are remarkably well for a man of your age, as I was remarking to Lucindy yesterday. By the way, how old are you, father?"

"Seventy-five years last birthday," answered the old man, "but I don't feel any older than I did fifteen years ago."

"Just so! Still, you are older; but I suppose you've fixed things so you've no worldly anxieties?"

"I think I've got enough to carry me through, Jeremiah."

"Of course you have, father; and more, too. You can't begin to spend your income."

This was said in an inquiring tone, but the old gentleman did not make any reply.

"It's only prudent to make your will, father, for, of course, a man of your age may be cut off sudden. Death comes like a thief in the night," added Mr. Brackett, utilizing one of the few passages of Scripture with which he happened to be acquainted.

"I dare say you are right, Jeremiah," said Mr. Dodge, with a smile.

"You mustn't think I am anxious on my own account," said Mr. Brackett. "Of course money's a consideration to me, and I'm willing to have you fix things as you think best. But don't you think you would feel better if you had things all fixed straight and sure on paper?"

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"Perhaps you are right, Mr. Brackett," said his father-in-law, with the same provoking smile, which Mr. Brackett was utterly unable to understand.

"I feel kinder delicate about speaking of it," pursued Mr. Brackett, "but I thought I ought to do it. Folks are so apt to put off the important duty to the last."

"By the way, Jeremiah, have you made your will?" asked the old man.

"I?" ejaculated Mr. Brackett, in surprise.

"Yes."

"No; I can't say I have."

"You'd better think of it. You're not as old as I am, but men younger than you die every day."

"You don't think I'm looking poorly, do you?" queried Mr. Brackett, nervously.

"Oh, no! And I hope I am not. Still, you may die before me."

"That's so, of course; but it ain't hardly likely."

"No; I hope you won't. I hope you will live to be as old as I am."

"I'll tell you what, father," said Brackett, cunningly, "I'll make my will if you make yours."

"I'll think of it, Jeremiah," said Mr. Dodge, politely.

"Confound the old man! I can't get anything out of him," said Brackett to himself. "I think he teases me on purpose. The idea of thinking he doesn't need to make a will because I don't! One thing's pretty certain, though—he hasn't made his will yet. If he should die without one, I will prevent them Eastern relations from hearing of it, if

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I can. I ought to have that property—and I mean to.”

Mr. Dodge smiled to himself when his son-in-law left him.

“Mr. Brackett thinks he is shrewd,” he said to himself, “but his shrewdness and cunning are of a very transparent character. What would he say if he knew that I have already made my will, and that his name is not mentioned in it? What would he say if he knew that my chief heir is at present in his employ, working for fifty cents a week? I suspect there would be a storm—in fact, a hurricane.”

CHAPTER XIV

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE TURNS UP

“Boy, does Mr Brackett live here?”

Andy looked up from his work, and saw standing at a little distance a man, apparently about thirty years of age.

He stared in amazement, for he had no difficulty in recognizing the younger of the two highwaymen who had so nearly robbed him of the money intrusted to him by the Misses Peabody. There are cases of remarkable resemblance, but Andy was a close observer, and he was satisfied this was not such a case, but that the companion of Mike Hogan stood before him.

“Is Mrs. Brackett at home?” continued the newcomer.

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"Yes, sir."

"Well, pilot me in, then," said the other, carelessly.

What does this robber want of Mrs. Brackett, I wonder?" thought Andy. "Ought I to warn her of his character?"

Mrs. Brackett was ironing in the kitchen, when Andy entered, followed by the stranger. She was not feeling very good-natured, and jumped to the conclusion that the intruder was a peddler.

"Henry," said she, sharply, "what makes you bring a peddler into the house? You know I never have anything to do with them."

"I must say, Lucinda," said the young man, bursting out laughing, "that you give a curious reception to your only brother."

"George, is it really you?" exclaimed Mrs. Brackett.

"I reckon it is. How are you, old girl?"

Mrs. Brackett, who was really attached to her younger brother, advanced eagerly and imprinted a kiss on his cheek, and began to express her wonder at his sudden appearance.

Andy, concluding that his presence was no longer required, left the kitchen, and returned to his work.

"It is strange enough that the man who tried to rob me should be the brother of my employer's wife," he soliloquized. "Of course, she can't be aware of his mode of life."

"He didn't recognize me," Andy reflected, with satisfaction.

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Meanwhile, the brother and sister were chatting together in the kitchen.

"What have you been doing, George?" asked Mrs. Brackett. "Why is it that you have been silent for so long?"

"Oh, I've been drifting about, Lucinda!" said her brother.

"But haven't you been engaged in any business?" asked his sister.

"Oh, well, part of the time I've been a collector," said George, with a quizzical smile.

He did not care to explain that his collecting had been from unoffending travelers, nor did he care to mention that he had served a three-years' term at Sing Sing prison, under an assumed name.

"It must be eight years since we met, George," went on Mrs. Brackett.

"Is it as long as that?" said George, indifferently.

"Yes, I know it is, for my dear little Tommy was a baby, and now he is a fine boy of eight years."

"Have you got any more children, Lucinda?"

"Yes—three more."

"Well, how are you and Brackett getting along?"

"We ain't getting rich," said Mrs. Brackett, with a critical glance at her brother, as if to determine whether he was likely to want assistance.

He seemed very well dressed, and she hoped his circumstances were good, for, though she was attached to him, she was, on the whole, more attached to her money.

"You seem to be pretty prosperous," said George. "Is the old man Dodge still living?"

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"He's living, and likely to live," said his sister, in a dissatisfied tone.

"How about the property? Is it all fixed right?" asked her brother, now showing some genuine interest.

"He gave Jeremiah the farm some years ago, but he won't give anything else, and we have to give him his board out of it.

"Has he got much money besides?"

"He must have somewhere from ten to fifteen thousand dollars."

"Whew! that's a pile! It will go to you in the end, won't it?"

"I don't know; it ought to. But he's got some relations off in the East, who may come in."

"Then you must get him to make a will in your favor."

"I wish he would. Brackett's spoken to him about it more than once, but he can be very obstinate when he chooses."

"You must introduce me to the old chap. Perhaps I can soften his obstinacy. I'm rather soft-spoken when I choose to be."

Mr. Brackett entered the kitchen at this moment, and glanced with some surprise at the young man, whom he did not at first recognize.

"It's brother George, Jeremiah," said Mrs. Brackett. "I don't wonder you don't recognize him, it's so long since we've seen him."

"How are you, George?" said his brother-in-law. "Where did you drop from?"

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"Oh, I fancied I'd like to see you and Lucinda again, so I took the cars, and here I am."

"Business good with you, George?"

"Rather slow! Still, I've managed to live. You seem pretty comfortable."

Mr. Brackett shook his head.

"Farming's hard work and poor pay," he said.

"I can't get ahead at all."

"When the old man pops off, you'll be pretty comfortable—hey?"

"I hope so; but there is no knowing how he'll leave the property."

"Mr. Brackett," said his wife, when they were alone, "we'd better not say anything to George about that money we've got in the savings bank. He might want to borrow it, and he was always careless about money."

"You're quite right, Lucindy," said her husband.

At supper the newcomer, George White, was introduced to Mr. Dodge and to Andy.

For the first time he seemed to see something familiar in our hero's face.

"It seems to me I've seen you somewhere before," he said.

"Where?"

"I suppose I'm mistaken," said White, looking puzzled; "but you look some like a boy I met some distance from here."

Andy forced himself to seem uninterested, and George White dropped the subject, concluding that he was mistaken.

Mrs. Brackett knew very little of the way in which

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her brother had passed the last eight years.

As for George White, his object in seeking out his sister was twofold. He was hard up, and hoped that he might borrow a sum of money from Lucinda, and also was glad to betake himself to a quiet place so far from New York, being quite too well known to the police authorities of the metropolitan district.

He was at present a fugitive from justice, having recently made an attempt to enter a house in Brooklyn, and failed, through the wakefulness of a member of the household.

Mr. and Mrs. Brackett and George White sat in a conclave together one evening soon after his arrival. They were discussing the obstinacy of Simon Dodge in deferring to make a will in favor of his disinterested son-in-law.

"Can't you persuade him to do it, Mr. Brackett?" asked White.

"I've tried my best, and failed," said Brackett. "You see, the old man's dreadfully obstinate when he sets about it.

"If I were in your place I'd see that a proper will was made," said White.

"How would you manage it?" asked Brackett.

"It's the simplest thing in the world. Is the old man's signature hard to imitate?"

"You don't mean——" ejaculated Brackett.

"Yes, I do."

"But it would be forgery, and that is a serious offense."

"Nothing venture, nothing have!" said White, boldly. "The property ought to come to you and

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my sister. It's a very simple thing, as I have already said."

"Supposing I agreed to it," he said, cautiously, "I haven't any skill in imitating writing. I couldn't write a will that would look like father's."

"Only the signature would need to resemble his handwriting," said White. "I'm pretty good at imitating signatures myself," he added, carelessly. "Haven't you got any of the old man's writing?"

"Yes; I've got a letter here," said Brackett, going to his desk and producing one from a drawer.

"That could be imitated easily," said White, after a casual examination.

"I'll leave you two to talk business at your leisure," said Mrs. Brackett. "I must go upstairs and look after the children."

Her brother looked after her with a mocking smile.

"Lucinda's sharp and cautious," he remarked. "She thinks it best not to know anything about it, though she'll be ready enough to profit by it. Come, now, Brackett, I've a proposal to make."

"What is it?"

"I'll draw up such a will as you think best, and sign and witness it."

"That's very kind of you, George——"

"Hold on a minute! You don't suppose I'm so benevolent as to do all this without pay, do you?"

"I didn't know," answered Brackett, his jaw dropping.

"I'm not such an idiot, thank you! I must have a hundred dollars down, and a thousand dollars when you come into the property."

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"That's rather steep!" said Brackett, disturbed.

"It isn't enough; but you are my sister's husband, and I'll work for you cheaper than for anyone else. I'd charge anybody else at least twice as much. Well, Brackett, what do you say?"

"It seems a great deal of money to pay for an hour's work. It won't take you more than an hour."

"You seem to forget that there's some risk about it. Such work as that you can't measure by the time it takes."

"Lucindy would never agree to such terms as that."

"The more fool she! Didn't you tell me the old man was good for over ten thousand dollars?"

"Yes; he must have at least as much as that."

"And I ask only a thousand dollars to give it to you."

"Father might make a will himself, leaving it to us," suggested Brackett. "In that case, the money would be thrown away."

"You oughtn't to begrudge it to your wife's brother, even then," said White. "Still, I'll tell you what I'll do. If you get the money by any other will, you needn't pay me the thousand dollars. Isn't that fair?"

This proposal struck Mr. Brackett favorably, and this was the compact ultimately formed.

Mrs. Brackett opposed it strenuously at first, being unwilling to relinquish so much money, even in favor of her own brother; but she was at last persuaded that it would be better to have nine-tenths of the property than none at all, and consented.

Several conferences were held, and the date of the

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forged will was carefully discussed. At length it was decided to fix upon a time six months earlier, and to affix the names, as witnesses, of two men who then lived in the village, but had now gone West, and were not likely to return. Indeed, it was reported that one of them was dead, which, of course, would make it impossible for him to deny his signature.

One evening it chanced that Andy, who had gone to the village, returned sooner than he intended on account of a sudden headache. In passing the window of the room where the conspirators were seated, he heard a chance word which arrested his attention.

He had no difficulty in overhearing enough to satisfy him of what was going on.

Of course his duty was clear. He must inform Mr. Dodge. The next morning an opportunity came. He not only told Uncle Simon what his son-in-law was doing, but for the first time made him acquainted with the real character of Mrs. Brackett's brother.

"I didn't think it possible," he said, "that Jeremiah Brackett would stoop to such a crime."

"I believe it is Mr. White who has put him up to it," said Andy.

"Perhaps you are right. At any rate, this confirms me in my resolution to go away. Next week, Henry, we will leave the old farm, where I have spent so many years, and in your mother's house I will spend the short time that remains to me."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Uncle Simon. I shall be very glad to get away myself."

"It is no longer safe for me to stay here," said

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the old man. "Once this will is forged, they will be impatient for me to die. As for their wicked scheming, it will avail them nothing. My true will is made, and in the hands of my lawyer, and is later than the date they have selected for the pretended one."

CHAPTER XV

A CUNNING PLOT

George White was a skillful penman—at one time he had been a bookkeeper—and he had no difficulty in drafting a will which might easily have passed for the genuine last will and testament of Simon Dodge.

It was shown to Mr. and Mrs. Brackett, and both were well satisfied with it.

"I guess this will make you all right, Jeremiah," said White. "It'll be worth a good deal of money to you."

"You're a master hand at the pen, George," said Brackett, admiringly. "Nobody will know this from the old man's signature. I'll take care of it till the time comes when it's wanted."

He held out his hand for the document, but George White drew back, smiling significantly.

"Not so fast, brother-in-law," he said. "You shall have this when I receive the hundred dollars. That was the bargain, you remember."

"You don't expect I've got a hundred dollars in cash, do you?" asked Brackett, disturbed. "I'll give

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you a hundred and fifty when the money comes in to me."

"I am to have a thousand dollars then."

"Of course; and this will make eleven hundred and fifty. Come, that's a fair offer."

"It may be, in your eyes, brother-in-law, but it isn't in mine. I tell you I must have the money now."

"Where do you think I can raise so much money?"

"Plenty of ways," replied White, coolly.

"There isn't anybody in town who has money to lend."

"I see that I shall have to tear the will up."

"No, no; don't do that," said Brackett.

"I'll wait till to-morrow then, and you can think over the matter. Talk with Lucinda, if you like. If she's wise, she'll agree to my demands."

Later in the day, George White found himself alone in the house. Mr. and Mrs. Brackett had gone to the village, taking the children with them.

"I think I'll make a voyage of discovery," said White. "I'll see if Lucinda hasn't got some money stowed away somewhere."

He went upstairs stealthily, and opened the door of his sister's chamber. Between the two windows stood the bureau, and to this George White instinctively made his way.

In a corner of the upper drawer his quick eye lighted on a savings-bank book, and he opened it eagerly.

"Five hundred dollars!" he exclaimed, triumphantly. "So it seems my poverty-stricken brother-in-

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law is not so poor, after all. He must draw the money out of the bank for me to-morrow, or I destroy the will."

George White left his sister's room, and a sudden impulse led him to continue his investigations.

It has already been said that he had been struck by Andy's resemblance to some face he had seen before. It occurred to him after a while that the boy resembled was the one who had baffled him in his attempt at robbery, on the highway, between Hamilton and Cranston.

White was desirous of learning something more about Andy, and it was with this object in view that he went up the attic stairs and entered the little room occupied by our hero.

Andy had no trunk, but there was an old dressing table in the room, containing a shallow drawer.

White opened this drawer, and curiously scanned the contents.

Andy had incautiously left in the drawer a letter received from his mother, addressed to the care of his friend, George Tierney, and it was of course postmarked Hamilton.

"Hamilton!" exclaimed White, in astonishment. "Henry receives letters from Hamilton! Why, that is the place where the boy lived who balked me, and had poor Mike Hogan arrested. It's the same boy, I'll bet fifty dollars! I saw the resemblance at once."

White opened the letter and read it through, and when he had finished, the whole secret was revealed to him.

"I've found you out, my boy, and I'll put a spoke

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in your wheel," he said to himself. "I've got a little score of my own to settle with you, my young friend, and don't you forget it. Henry Miller, alias Andy Gordon, you'll find that you are no match for George White. Now, how shall I revenge myself on him?"

A bright idea occurred to White.

He went back to his sister's bedroom, took the savings-bank book, and carrying it up to the little attic chamber, put it in Andy's drawer, but away back in one corner, where the boy himself would not be likely to see it.

Mr. and Mrs. Brackett got home about four o'clock. They had been talking over the proposal to pay White a hundred dollars cash, but had not been able to make up their minds to do it.

In fact, paying out ready money seemed as bad to Mrs. Brackett—whose mean, parsimonious disposition has already been referred to—as having a tooth drawn.

Indeed, I may say, confidentially, that she would have preferred to lose half a dozen teeth rather than part with a hundred dollars.

"We'll put George off," she said to her husband, as they were riding home. "We'll pretend that we are trying to raise the money, but can't do it. Perhaps he will get impatient and agree to take less. A hundred dollars is an outrageous price for such a small job."

"So I think, Lucindy," chimed in her husband. "Really your brother seems to me very grasping."

"So he is, and very extravagant besides. He could

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squander more money in a week than we could lay by in six months."

Of course they would not have dared to discuss this subject in presence of the children; but they had been left behind, with the exception of the youngest, two years of age, to spend the afternoon with some juvenile companions.

"It's lucky George doesn't know about our account in the savings bank, Lucindy."

"If he knew that, it would be impossible to get rid of paying the money."

"Suppose he won't give up the will without the whole amount down?"

"He will. It will do him no good, and if he keeps it or destroys it he won't get a cent. I know he needs money, for he told me the other day that he was reduced to his last five dollars. If we remain firm, he'll come to our terms."

Mrs. Brackett spoke confidently and felt so, but it was not long before she found occasion to reverse her opinion of her brother.

They found him smoking a pipe on the lawn, or grass plat, near the back door.

"Had a pleasant ride?" he asked, lazily.

"Yes, George," said his sister. "What have you been doing?"

"Oh, killing time!" he answered, indifferently. "I have been thinking, Lucinda, that I should have to leave you very soon."

"You mustn't hurry," said Mrs. Brackett; but she felt glad to hear that her brother was likely to leave her soon

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She did not relish having a free boarder, even if he were her own brother, and, besides, judged that they could drive a better bargain with him in that case.

"Oh, I didn't expect to stay here very long," said White. "But I can't go without the hundred dollars."

"Really, George, you can't be aware how hard it is to raise money," said his brother-in-law."

"Oh, yes, I can!" said George, smiling. "I find it deuced uphill work myself," and he glanced knowingly at Mr. Brackett.

"I mean that I find it hard to raise it for you. You see, a hundred dollars is a large sum. If you'd been willing now to take twenty-five and the balance in installments— or, better still, when we come into the money—I think I could arrange it."

"My dear brother-in-law," said White, with a smile, "you do it well—very well, indeed. If I hadn't been round the world a little, I dare say I should be taken in, and accept your statement for gospel."

"I hope you don't think my husband would deceive you, George," said his sister, with dignity.

"Oh, of course not! Still, I find it is the general custom to look out for number one."

"You always looked out for number one, George," said his sister, bluntly.

"Yes, I flatter myself I did; but to return to business. You seem to be at a loss to know where you can raise the hundred dollars to which I am entitled for my services."

"You are right there."

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"Then I will tell you where you can find it."

"I wish you would," said Brackett, by no means prepared for the reply that awaited him.

"It is simple enough, Jeremiah. Draw it out of the savings bank. You will have four hundred dollars left."

Mr. Brackett stared at his brother-in-law in ludicrous dismay, while his wife fairly gasped for breath.

Here was a revelation, indeed. Their important secret had been discovered, and neither knew what to say.

"Who told you we had any money in the savings bank, George?" demanded Mr. Brackett.

"Nobody."

"I wish we had money in the bank," he said.

"Lucinda, you have five hundred dollars in the savings bank, and you know it; and, what's more, I know it."

"Who told you?" demanded his sister, desperately.

"I have seen the book."

"Have you dared to go to my bureau drawer?" exclaimed Mrs. Brackett, angrily.

"There it comes out!" said White, laughing. "No, I have not been to your bureau drawer."

"Then, how could you see my bank book?"

"Then it seems you have one, Lucinda. So I thought."

"I have a small account in the bank, I admit," said Mrs. Brackett. "But it's only a few dollars."

"Didn't I tell you I had seen the book? Why do you try to deceive me?"

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"Then you have been to my bureau."

"It isn't in your bureau."

"Then where is it?"

"I must tell you the story, and then you will understand how I came to find out about your deposit. That boy of yours, Henry Miller, I distrusted as soon as I saw him. I couldn't place him, but I was convinced I had seen him somewhere, and that his character was bad."

"Just what I always thought!" ejaculated Mrs. Brackett, profoundly gratified at hearing something to Andy's discredit.

"Well, this afternoon, being left alone in the house, I thought I would search Henry's room, being influenced chiefly by missing a small amount of money a day or two since."

"Did you find it in the boy's room?" asked Lucinda.

"I didn't find any money, but on opening the drawer of the dressing table, tucked away in a corner, I saw a savings-bank book. I thought it was his, but on examining it I discovered your name. Of course I opened it, and that is the way I found how much money you had."

"But what could the boy want with the book?" asked Brackett.

"He intended to forge an order and draw some of the money as soon as he went to Jefferson. Do you know who he is?"

"I don't know anything beyond his name," said Brackett.

"You don't even know that!" said White, trium-

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phantly. "His name is not Henry Miller at all."

"What is it, George?" asked Mrs. Brackett, eagerly.

"His name is Andy Gordon, and his mother is the niece of your father-in-law!"

Mr. and Mrs. Brackett stared at each other in consternation.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW THE TABLES WERE TURNED

"Of course," continued White, "it is evident enough why the boy came here. He wanted to worm himself into the confidence of your father-in-law and deprive you of the property which ought to come to you. You would never have known of this conspiracy but for me, Lucinda. And yet you begrudge me the small sum you agreed to pay me."

"Jeremiah," said Mrs. Brackett, "it is true what George says. We must manage to pay him the money."

"If you think best, Lucindy," said her husband, submissively; "but allow me to suggest that if it is true, and we lose father's money, we shall be very close-pressed ourselves."

"You don't understand, brother-in-law," said White, "that the theft of your bank book will blast Henry's, or rather Andy Gordon's, reputation, and consign him to a prison. Moreover, when the old

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man finds out what a scamp the boy is, he won't be very apt to make him his heir."

"What shall we do about the matter? How shall we proceed? Shall we have the boy arrested?" asked Brackett.

"I'll tell you. Send for the old man and the boy at once. Then we'll go upstairs together and discover the bank book in the boy's drawer."

"There's one objection," said Brackett, uneasily. "Father doesn't know that we have any money in the savings bank."

"The old man will have to know now. You can explain the matter some way," said White.

Mr. Brackett went up to Mr. Dodge's room and called him down, while Mrs. Brackett, with a stern frown, summoned Andy from the yard, where he was at work.

When all were gathered in the sitting room, Mrs. Brackett began.

"Father," she said, "we have discovered that there is a thief in the house."

Curiously it chanced that neither Andy nor Mr. Dodge looked nervous, but each fixed his eyes upon George White.

"Well," said Simon Dodge, after a pause, "who is it?"

"It is that boy!" said Mrs. Brackett, venomously pointing to Andy.

"Who charges me with being a thief?" demanded Andy.

"I do!" said George White, smiling triumphantly.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said Andy, contemptuously.

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"What is Henry charged with stealing?" asked Mr. Dodge, mildly.

"My sister's savings-bank book," answered White.

"So you have a deposit in the savings-bank?" said Simon Dodge, in a tone which rather disconcerted his self-styled daughter-in-law.

"Jeremiah and I, by great economy, had saved something," she explained, hurriedly; "though we could hardly hope to keep it long, on account of our increasing expenses."

"Suppose we go up to the boy's room, and convince you all of his character," said White.

"Lead on, sir!" said the old man, with dignity. "I shall not believe that Henry is a thief till I have the most convincing proof."

Together they went upstairs, and filed one by one into the attic chamber occupied by our hero.

George White then stepped up to the dressing table already referred to, and opened the drawer wide.

From the corner he drew out the savings-bank book.

"There!" said he, with a flourish, "what do you say to that?"

"What do you say to it, Henry?" asked Simon Dodge, kindly.

"That I never saw the book before in my life," answered our hero, promptly.

"Then perhaps you'll be kind enough to tell us how it did get there, young man." said George White.

"I will, sir," answered Andy, with the utmost coolness. "You put it there."

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"I put it there?" exclaimed White. "My young friend, that is entirely too thin."

"I'd like to box your ears, you young slanderer!" exclaimed Mrs. Brackett. "You're a humbug, as well as a thief! You're an impostor, and we've found you out."

"How is Henry an impostor?" quietly asked Mr. Dodge.

"His name is no more Henry Miller than mine is," vociferated Mr. Brackett, furiously.

"Yes, confirmed Simon Dodge; "since you have found it out, I may as well introduce Henry Miller as my grand-nephew, Andy Gordon, of the town of Hamilton."

"What do you say to your grand-nephew turning out to be a thief?" asked Mr. Brackett, triumphantly.

"What do I say? I say that it's a lie!" answered the old man, unexpectedly.

"He's been detected in the act. The book was found in his drawer."

"And that man put it in," said the old man, with spirit, pointing to George White.

"How dare you say this?" demanded White, angrily.

"Because I have been in the house all the afternoon. I saw you steal into your sister's room, and presently emerge with the book. I afterward saw you go up with it to Andy's room. The inference is plain enough."

"I don't believe it," said Mrs. Brackett, faintly.

"Perhaps you will when you hear a little more

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about this precious brother of yours. Andy, tell Mrs. Brackett what you know about him."

Andy spoke without hesitation:

"The last time I saw him he tried to rob me of a large sum which I was carrying to deposit in the bank, three hundred miles from here. He was in company with an older man, who was caught, and is now serving a term of years in State's prison."

"It's a base lie!" said White, but his face showed that the charge was true. "The boy is accusing me to get off himself. Do you believe this shameful story, Lucinda?"

"Of course I don't. The boy slanders you, George. Will you send for the constable and have the young rascal arrested?"

"As you please, madam," said Andy coolly. "I shall be able to prove my innocence."

At this moment a loud knocking was heard below, and they hurried downstairs into the sitting room.

"Oh, it's the constable!" said Mrs. Brackett, joyfully. "Mr. Peters, we were just going to send for you to arrest a thief."

"Oh, you've found him out, have you?" asked Mr. Peters, looking rather surprised.

"Do you know anything about it?" said Mrs. Brackett, in equal surprise.

"This gentleman gave me full particulars," said Mr. Peters, pointing to his companion, a quiet man in black.

"Who is he?"

"Detective Badger, of New York."

"I see the man I want," said Badger, quietly.

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"George White, alias Jack Rugg, you are my prisoner!"

"No, it's the boy you are to arrest," said Mrs. Brackett.

"Pardon me, madam," said the detective, "I know my man. Indeed, he is well known to the metropolitan police."

White tried to dash by, but unsuccessfully.

The detective brought out a pair of handcuffs, and, with the help of the constable, secured him.

Mrs. Brackett sank into a chair in consternation. When the police authorities had carried away their prisoner, Mr. Dodge said to Mr. and Mrs. Brackett:

"After what has occurred, I decline to pass another night under your roof. Andy will go with me to the hotel, and I shall leave you to-morrow, to spend the remainder of my days in his mother's house."

"So this is what you have been plotting at, is it?" asked Mrs. Brackett, her eyes flashing. "This is why this boy crept into our home under a false name and under false pretenses!"

"He came because I wrote to his mother, asking her to send him," said Mr. Dodge, with dignity. "He came to help me, and necessarily to take a new name, in order not to excite your suspicions."

"Your mind has failed," said Mrs. Brackett, sharply, "and you have fallen a victim to designing people."

"No, madam. My mind has not failed!" said Simon Dodge. "I have escaped the designs of your husband and yourself, to whom I have already been

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more liberal than you had any right to expect. What property I have left will go to this boy, who is my heir, and I recommend you to destroy the forged will, which you instigated your brother to write. Should you undertake to interfere with me, this criminal project of yours shall be revealed to the public. Come, Andy, go and pack your things."

Half an hour later a carriage drew up to the door, and Andy and the old man drove away.

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSION

Mrs. Gordon, in her humble home in Hamilton, was engaged in sewing toward the close of the afternoon. Her face wore an anxious look, for she had not heard from Andy for a longer time than usual. He had written, but the letter had not come to hand.

"I am afraid Andy is sick," she said to herself. "How long it seems since I last saw him! He is my all, and if anything should happen to him, I don't know what would become of me."

Just then in came Miss Susan Peabody, who had always been attached to Mrs. Gordon.

"Well, Mrs. Gordon, and what do you hear from Andy?" she asked.

"Nothing," answered the widow, sadly. "I have not had a letter for nearly a fortnight."

"I heard something to-day that made me very angry," said Miss Susan.

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"About Andy?" asked Mrs. Gordon, looking up.

"Yes about Andy. It's scandalous!"

"You make me nervous," said the widow. "Tell me what it is, my good friend."

"As far as I can judge, it's a rumor set afloat by Herbert Ross, who never liked Andy. He claims to have seen a paragraph—now you mustn't mind it, for of course t's a falsehood—implicating Andy in some crime—stealing, I believe."

"It's a base falsehood!" said Mrs. Gordon, her pale face flushing with justifiable anger.

"Of course it is; and I wouldn't have spoken of it if the report had not obtained considerable currency. Don't let it trouble you."

"I won't!" said Mrs. Gordon, with spirit. "It only shows the malice and meanness of the person who set it afloat."

"I suppose one reason for such rumor is, that people are very curious to learn where Andy has gone."

"Very likely. My anxiety is not at all about Andy's behavior, but about his health. If I were only sure that he was well, I would feel perfectly unconcerned."

"That is right Mrs. Gordon. You look at matters in the right light. I was always very much attached to Andy, as I may some time show. Not many boys would have defended my house and money as bravely as Andy did."

"He was always a good boy. I have never had reason to feel ashamed of him," said the mother, proudly.

Just then there was a knock at the door. Mrs.

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Gordon rose and opened it. To her surprise she saw before her the tall, dignified figure of Rev. Dr. Euclid, who the reader will remember was the preceptor of the Hamilton Academy.

Mrs. Gordon had a high respect for Dr. Euclid, and welcomed him cordially.

"I am glad to see you, Dr. Euclid," said she. "Won't you come in?"

"Thank you, Mrs. Gordon; I will come in for five minutes, but I cannot tarry long. When did you hear from your son, Andy?"

"Not for two weeks—or nearly two weeks."

"He was well?" questioned the doctor.

"Quite well, then; but I am feeling somewhat anxious about him now, on account of the delay of letters."

"Don't let that trouble you. Letters often miscarry."

"I understand," said Mrs. Gordon, "that some malicious person is spreading slanderous reports about Andy. Have you heard anything of the kind, Dr. Euclid?"

"Yes, Mrs. Gordon; but I did not give one moment's credence to them."

"Can you tell me anything about the nature of the reports?"

"It appears that in some paper was published a paragraph touching a certain Andrew Gordon, who was charged with stealing a sum of money from his employer, but it was expressly stated that he was twenty-five years of age. Andy has ill-wishers, how-

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ever, who, overlooking this circumstance, have been glad to report that he was in trouble."

"It is contemptible!" said Miss Susan Peabody, warmly.

"So it is, my dear Miss Peabody," said Dr. Euclid. "Andy was my favorite pupil, and I will stake my own reputation on his honor and honesty."

"Who is most active in circulating this report?" asked the widow.

"I suspect my pupil, Herbert Ross, who never liked your son, has been active in the matter. He is a selfish, purse-proud, idle boy, and Andy is worth half a dozen of him."

"Who is speaking so well of Andy?" asked a young, fresh voice, the sound of which startled all three.

Immediately the door was thrown open, and Andy himself, closely followed by a weak, old man, entered the room.

"Andy, my dear boy," exclaimed his mother, and folded him, with inexpressible joy, in her arms.

"Mother, this is Uncle Simon Dodge," said our hero, when the first greeting was over. "Won't you give him a welcome?"

"Uncle Simon," said Mrs. Gordon, cordially, "I am glad to see you. If you are willing to share our humble home, you may consider yourself now at home."

"It is my strongest wish," said the old man, with beaming face.

Here Andy introduced his uncle to Miss Peabody and Dr. Euclid, who gave him a friendly greeting, and expressed a wish to know him better.

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"It is well you have come, Andy," said Miss Peabody, "to quiet the reports that are circulating about you."

"What are they?" asked Andy.

"It is said you have stolen a large sum of money, and I presume you are supposed to be in jail."

"Then I'll show myself in the village this evening," said Andy, laughing, "to satisfy my good friends that there's a mistake. Was Herbert Ross very sorry to hear it?"

"I believe he has been one of the most active in spreading the report."

"Poor Herbert! How disappointed he will be!" said Andy, laughing good-naturedly.

"An hour later, Andy met Herbert Ross on the street.

Herbert, who had not heard of our hero's return, started as if he had met a serpent.

"Good-evening, Herbert," said Andy, good-naturedly.

"Have you got back?" asked Herbert, curiosity struggling with disappointment.

"It looks like it, doesn't it?"

"I thought you had got into trouble?" said Herbert. "How did you manage to get out of it?"

Andy laughed.

"I hear," he said, "that some of my good friends have been circulating bad reports about me. It's a pity to spoil their enjoyment, but it's another person entirely who has misbehaved himself. As I am not twenty-five, I don't see how anyone should think it was I."

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"That might be a mistake you know. The name was Andrew Gordon."

"Then I wish Andrew Gordon would change his name. I assure you, Herbert, I have no intention of taking up the business of stealing."

"You'd better not," said Herbert, stiffly, feeling rather suspicious that Andy was laughing at him.

"Did you make any money when you were away?" asked Herbert.

"Oh, yes! I got a situation directly."

"Was the pay good?"

"Fifty cents a week and my board," answered Andy, gravely.

Herbert smiled scornfully.

"You'd better have stayed at home," he said.

"I don't know about that. I am well satisfied with the success of my journey."

"You can't be janitor again!" said Herbert, triumphantly.

"Why not?"

"Another boy has got it, and Dr. Euclid won't put him out, just to oblige you."

"I am not a candidate for the position of janitor," said Andy.

"Don't you mean to go to school, then?"

"Oh, yes! I want to continue my education," said Andy.

"You know enough already for a poor boy."

"Thank you for the compliment!"

"You'd better get a place somewhere to work."

"Thank you! But, as I propose to go to college, I shall go back to the academy."

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"Go to college! How can you go to college? Why, you haven't a cent!"

"I can't stop to explain, Herbert. But you'll hear before long."

Herbert did hear, and so did the whole village, that Andy had brought back with him a rich uncle, who was credited with being worth fifty thousand dollars.

We know that this is not true, but rumor is prone to exaggerate the extent of a man's fortune.

It was moreover, reported—and this on good authority—that Andy was to be his uncle's heir.

It is surprising how much his social importance, and that of his mother, were enhanced by this fact. Even those who had credited the story of Andy's being a thief were among the first to congratulate him; and Herbert Ross, disagreeable as the news was to him, gave up his sneers and became actually civil. Indeed, he would have become intimate with Andy, if our hero had encouraged him to do so.

The little cottage proved too small and inconvenient, now that the widow had another inmate, and Mr. Dodge bought a handsome house opposite that of lawyer Ross, from a manufacturer about to leave town, and with the furniture, both of which he got at an excellent bargain.

Andy went back to school, and soon made up what he had lost by absence. He was no longer janitor, but he was never ashamed to speak of the time in which he had filled that office.

It never rains but it pours. When the Misses Peabody died it turned out that they left their entire

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property to Andy, having no near relatives to bequeath it to.

He is recognized as the heir of Mr. Dodge, who is still living in comfortable enjoyment of life at the age of eighty, and so our young hero is likely to have no pecuniary anxieties.

As I write, he is a member of the senior class at Yale College, and holds a distinguished rank among his class-mates.

Herbert Ross is in the same class, but he drags along near the foot, and seems likely to confer little credit upon his alma mater.

Andy will study law, and we may fairly expect a creditable, perhaps brilliant, position for the young man whose early poverty compelled him to fill the position of a janitor.

THE END





